Patterns of Intersemiotic Cohesion in the Moving Image Text

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates intersemiotic cohesion in the moving image text popularly known as film discourse. The investigation aimed at identifying the interaction pattern of visual verbal strands in an unfolding text of selected video films. The corpus of the study consists of six movie pictures and corresponding excerpts of conversation(s) from selected film scripts. Baumgarten (2008) theory of visual verbal cohesion and Ngamsa (2012) methodological consideration were adopted for the annotation and matching of deictic devices as both explicit-- *invitro* and implicit--*invivo* . The findings of the paper therefore show that interaction of visual and verbal semiotic strands is always achieved at the point of convergence and at the instance of reference items, pronouns, adjectives and other extra linguistic features—signs and existents. The study finally recommends that film directors, screenplay writers and text linguists should explore the use of intersemiotic cohesive devices for explication of the moving image text.
Key words: Intersemiotic, Cohesion, Moving Image Text and Film Discourse.

Introduction

Intersemiotic cohesion is a concept which explains the interaction of numerous linguistic features that form text and make meaning in film discourse. It is an expression commonly used in multimedia semiotics which has become an integral part of MDA Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress and Leeuwen 1976; Lemke 1978; Johnstone 2008 and O' Halloran 2009). In functional terms, intersemiotic cohesion simply registers the place of cohesion in multisemiotic texts defined as digital texts, television discourses, film scripts, moving image texts and other genres of the new media (Peeters, 2010:122-123). O'Halloran (2006:7) particularly explicates this concept in context of the role cohesion plays in the unfolding of a text which in turn constitutes all the essential meaning making resources: words, image, texts, symbols, sounds, modalities, signs and all forms of media. Eisentein (1949:50)earlier on, expurgates this concept further as he expostulates that if two arbitrary elements (visual and verbal strands) are joined together (cohesion), they invariably lead to a new idea (the moving image text) which emerges from the juxtaposition of a new quality (intersemiotic cohesion).
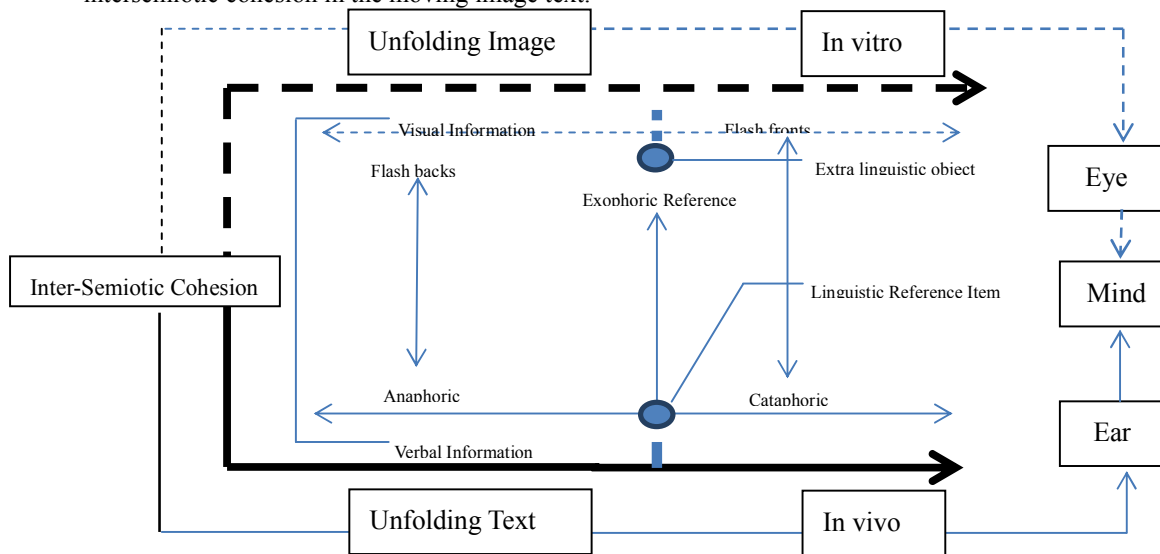
Defining a premise for film discourse as moving image text, Ngamsa (2012:27) upholds Jahn (2003) taxonomic transformation of the film scripts as discourse whose intertextuality, interdiscoursivity and intersemiotic components remain largely, narrative. As a new trend into the broad field of linguistics equally, investigating the moving image text/film discourse, becomes an unparallel need of multimodal discourse analysis. This paper therefore aims to further examine the moving image text as a bimodal composition of visual and verbal strands commonly known as film text/discourse. In this attempt, a preliminary investigative framework of intersemiotic pattern of cohesion set to achieve texture, is presented by way of illustrating integrative multimodality of a typical multisemiotic text-film discourse or the moving image text. By so doing, deictic lexical items and references to persons, place and action are considered as pointers to the theories and concepts that work as intersemiotic cohesive devices.

Theoretical Framework

The module that provides a schema for the investigation of the moving image in this study is based on Baumgarten (2008), a theory that allows the integration of SFMDA Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis as a tenable yardstick for the analysis of film discourse. While other proponents of the SFMDA theory like Thibault (1991) and Van Leeuwen (2001) dwelled more on the premise of discourse based upon Halliday and Hasan (1976), and short of emphasis on semiotic strands, Baumgarten (2008) differs by clearly focusing on elaborating the premise of intersemiotic cohesion. In Baumgarten's theory of visual verbal syncrony, points of interaction are formed at the instance of an unfolding text_ film discourse.

Consolidating this 'theory of visual verbal syncrony', Ngamsa (2012:110-111) in an elaborate dissertation provides a circuit of intersemiotic cohesion in a typical multimodal discourse. In this schema represented in a diagramme, the unfolding image "Invitro" appeals to the eye; while the unfolding text (verbal strand) that is invivo, appeals to the ear. In the illustration, the two strands (invitro and invivo) independently but implicitly connect

to the mind which cognitively creates a narrative film discourse. The figure below elaborates this claim as pointer to intersemiotic cohesion in the moving image text:

```
  ┌─────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────┐
  │  Unfolding Image    │          │  In vitro   │
  └─────────────────────┘          └─────────────┘

        ← - Visual Information - →      Flash fronts
                                                          ┌─────────┐
      Flash backs              ●        Extra linguistic obiect │   Eye   │
                                                          └─────────┘
                      Exophoric Reference
  ┌────────────────────────┐                              ┌─────────┐
  │ Inter-Semiotic Cohesion │       Linguistic Reference Item │  Mind   │
  └────────────────────────┘                              └─────────┘

      Anaphoric         ●        Cataphoric                ┌─────────┐
                                                           │   Ear   │
          Verbal Information                               └─────────┘

  ┌─────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────┐
  │   Unfolding Text    │          │   In vivo   │
  └─────────────────────┘          └─────────────┘
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A Circuit of Inter-semiotic Cohesion in Multimodal Discourse (Moving image text)

The provisions of the diagramme above show an intersemiotic circuit of how two strands‗ image and text (visual/verbal) integrate to make meaning in context. The intersemiotic cohesion is first initiated by a linguistic reference item that is endophoric, pointing to an exhophoric circumstance which slightly draws down to an extralinguistic object/subject which is visual. This interaction (intersemiotic cohesion), at spatro-temporal levels, is found to cohere also at levels that are either anaphoric (flashback), or cataphoric (flash front) in order to generate narrative context in a moving image text.

In this theoretical provision by Baumgarten (2008), reinforced by Ngamsa (2012), participants known as "existents" in conversational discourse generally, assert linguistic reference items to extra-linguistic reality in order to make objects, issues or actions a subject matter. In effect, the visual verbal structures are identified though as parallel yet implicitly dependent upon each other linguistically. It also suggests that a repertoire of lexical and grammatical resources aid in making meaning through pronouns, determiners, time adverbials, nouns and place deixis. Even where such reference items stand as either indexicals or exhophoric items, the linguistic features remain *ipso facto* and are known to comprise instruction to hearer/viewer who in turn draws meaning from images displayed (Jauro 2011).

Methodological Consideration

This study is corpus based and particularly descriptive. Three of the films scripts and movie pictures considered for this investigation are purposively selected from the Amtel Malta Box Office productions of the last ten years in Nigeria. Being world rated Nollywood video films, the authenticity and sufficiency of data are justified by provisions that universalize the corpus as tenable for linguistic analysis (Wahough, 1986).

Table of Corpus Classification

Video Films/Film Discourse	Picture category	Genre/Theme	Date of Production
1. Sitanda	A^1, A^2, A^3,	An epic centred on taboo/cast system	2005
2 .White Waters	B1,B2	Romance and Heroism	2006
3 .Cindy's Note	C1,	Youth orientation and community service	2007

The procedure for analysis of intersemiotic cohesion in the selected film discourse is based upon Ngamsa (2012:150) selection and matching format. To investigate the corpus however, a total of six movie pictures were selected using the VLC Video Lan Compiler and matched to corresponding utterances for annotation and further illustration of visual verbal synchrony.

Presentation and Findings

The research sets out to first present the movie pictures as the visual strand supported by the matching verbal (textual) strand in a complementary gesture. Following this presentation is the second segment on descriptive analysis of the identifiable pattern of intersemiotic cohesion (verbal-visual cohesion) in the selected video films.

SITANDA

In Sitanda, the picture of the young boy beside the Wiseone A1 and of the slave raiders A2 approaching, exemplify an ongoing action that synchronized both verbal and visual strands in the video film. Three of the pictures numsered A1—A2—A3 end with the Wiseone advising Sitanda (the young boy) to "Run" and escape the approaching "men who are evil

Movie Pictures: A1—A2---A3

Picture   A1 <u>Wiseone (right) pointing a stick:</u>

Who are these men walking towards us?

Picture   A2   <u>Wiseone(left)   relieving   Sitanda</u>

Sitanda run, these men are evil men.

I can sense it.

Picture A3 Sitanda (right) holding back to the Wiseone:

Papa, I will not run without you

In example 1 above, the statements tagged to the movie pictures A1 – A2 renders explicit reference(s) to three reference items <u>who</u> (relative pronoun), <u>these</u> (<u>demonstrative</u>) and <u>us</u> (pronoun). The pronouns are persons deixis (deitic – references) pointing to 'actors' in context. They simply grammaticalise the role of participants: the approaching men represented by (who and these). In the same context, (Sitanda and Wiseone) are also represented by <u>Us</u>. However, the lexical item <u>these</u> which is an article/pronoun (reference) doubles also as place/spatial deixis – defining the premise of the film occurrence and place of the action.

Picture A3 specifically compliments the A1 and A2 by using person deixis, lexical collocation and repetition to achieve visual verbal cohesion. In the first sentence of A2 for instance, the Wiseone uses the proper noun Sitanda and <u>I</u> (personal pronoun) to point at 'themselves' in contrast the noun phrase "these men" and adjectival phrase referring to "evil men". The use of the pronoun <u>It</u> in the same sentence tagged to A1 referring to the adjective "evil, equally, collocates anaphorically. In the last part of the second statement of A3: "papa, I will not run without you", Sitanda, uses **I** and **you** as pronominal references to exemplify the action of 'holding back' to the Wiseone. The repetition of the 'lexical verbal' item "run" in the two sentences equally reiterates the action exhibited in the episode – Sitanda's refusal to run away from the "men" who are construed to be "evil". This action is clearly shown by his insisting to hold back to the Wiseone in picture A3.

WHITE WATERS

The film <u>White Waters</u> also has instances of visual verbal cohesion. In most parts of the unfolding discourse, the visual integration seems to tilt towards the verbal plane ensuring that images/action posted, usually superimpose on the verbal commentary or vice versa. In this type of cohesion, there appears to be both synchrony and integration of visual and verbal information.

A typical example of visual-verbal synchrony is shown by pictures B1 – B2. In the movie picture shots, Norlah in B1 looks inside a bag containing an item she brought for Melvin – picture B2. The same episode captures Grandma showing Melvin the item brought by Norlah. In the context, the item/present is the joint focus of the two speakers, Norlah and Grandma. Melvin (male) in picture B1 looks at the item held by Grandma:

Movie Pictures : B1   Picture B2

B1. <u>Norlah alone: Looking into the item at hand</u>
   I just brought <u>this</u> for Melvin
B 2. <u>Grandma (right) holding the item from Norlah (left) to Melvin (male):</u>
   See <u>what</u> Norlah brought for you

From the two verbal statements in movie pictures B1 and B2 integrating the visual strands (image and action), the lexical items "what" and "this" as determiners are noted pointing to the object/item of reference (the gift/item) which Norlah brought for Melvin. The visual item focused upon by the characters in action consequently points to a precise reference signaling to it by the verb, 'see' as the center of attention. By implication, this integration and synchrony leads to a stronger cohesion between visual reference item to the verbally uttered statements.

CINDY'S NOTES

<u>Cindy's Notes</u>, a narrative rendering of a diary notes, centres on the life and service of a female graduate in a peasant community. The video film utilizes linguistic and extra-linguistic features to achieve visual-verbal cohesion. The verbal structures/statements mostly used are found to refer to the unfolding visual image construed invitro. In this context, place and person deixises are used to point at the extra-linguistic circumstances – which are spatio-temporal/action.

There is also a clear example of the place deixis *invivo* in the unfolding text (verbal) matching the unfolding image (visual) which is a mobile phone conversation between Cindy and Wilson. Picture C and the accompanying conversation are noted as clear examples of the verbal visual synchrony in film discourse pointing at place, proximity and persons in focus.

Movie Picture: C

C. Cindy (female in front of Wilson):
   1. *Come on, Wilson, enough of the mischief. Seriously, where are you?*
   Wilson (Male behind Cindy):
2. *Look behind you.*

In picture C, both the mobile phones held by the persons involved are shown. They all remain the objects and subjects figuring out the point of convergence where all of them are clearly determined by the pronoun "you" referred to by both Cindy and Wilson. It stands in as a reference item that equally places the two of them in the conversational roles they play/act – which is also a question and answer. The lexical item **Look** which is verbal in sentence two equally stands as a pointing device that draws attention the ongoing scene in the film discourse.

The second deitic device in the unfolding text of the conversational exchanges between Cindy and Wilson, refers to the spatial/locative deixis. In this circumstance, a form of reference similarly highlighted in Saheed (2007:182), is created around the persons involved. In this context an explicit reference is made to persons on a space relative to the time of speaking – the context. In the first instance, a segment of Cindy's question 'where are you?" seeks to locate a place (the where about of Wilson seen standing behind Cindy. By this visual-verbal synchrony, both the persons and the locative references "where" and "behind" are noted to have achieved a joint action making meaning in film discourse.

In Cindy's Notes generally, locative adverbials and pronominal reference items are used for communicative effect to achieve both the interpersonal and contextual meanings expressed in the film text_ visual and verbal.

Conclusion

It is clear from the findings of this study that there are identifiable patterns of visual verbal synchrony in the moving image text. In the three samples of the films investigated, exhophoric reference items like pronouns and demonstratives often function as discourse pointers and connectors for meaning making to readers, viewers and listeners. It is also realized that the investigated corpus, typical of film discourse in general, provides a direct connection between implicit lexical items and their corresponding explicit visual composition. This is further reinforced by extensive utilization of place and person deixises that improve and develop patterns of intersemiotic cohesion for referential explicitness.

There is equally more to the overriding challenge to the interpretation and investigation of the multimodal discourse analysis which this study and similar others should delve into. At

collaborative level, it is suggested that interdisciplinary models and frameworks be encouraged in order to popularize the understanding of intersemiotic cohesion in the film discourse.

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