



## Curating Educational Visuals Through Multimodal Discourse Analysis: A Comparative Study

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<p><b>Received:</b> 29/04/2025</p> <hr/> <p><b>Accepted:</b> 02/06/2025</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Educational visuals, multimodal discourse analysis, curating visuals, visuals' metafunctions, content analysis..</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Abstract</i></p> <p><i>This research comprises a comparative content analysis of two images of a Moroccan ethnically nuanced marriage ceremony. The content analysis was conducted by leveraging Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen's framework (2006). The researchers shed light on the representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions encompassed within the visuals. The latter were subjected to a systematic exploration, uncovering certain visual elements that construct richer narratives and proving their capacity to convey complex cultural significations. The comparative analysis concluded that it the imperative to adopt such frameworks while curating educational visuals, adapting textbooks, or localizing content. Curators of educational visuals (EVs) should transcend mere content illustration and strive to engage students, foster their intercultural understanding, and support the construction of shared values, thus maximizing EVs' pedagogical impact.</i></p>
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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Many ELT practitioners have recourse to visual aids while adapting and localizing educational materials. Besides enhancing comprehension, visuals can stimulate learners' curiosity, foster their engagement, and promote intercultural understanding and inclusion. Nonetheless, the choice of educational visuals is sometimes based on illustrative convenience rather than their educational potential and culturally complex narration (Yunus et al., 2013). Moroccan classrooms, as a matter of fact, represent venues that host multicultural backgrounds, a fact that calls for more benchmarks to curate inclusive and culturally representative visuals.

Despite the aforementioned role of educational visuals in promoting learning and intercultural competence, there remains a notable gap in the methodological curative process (Ober et al., 2023). Some images fail to display the dynamism, rich narration, and layered meanings that characterize real-life events, which deprives learners of an opportunity to engage better with content and peers. In this time and age, where students have become more visual (Stadlinger et al., 2021), there is an increasing need for frameworks to be adopted in order to make informed selections or adaptation of educational visuals.

The researchers employed Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal discourse analysis framework to address this gap. The rigorous approach to unraveling the

representational, interactive, and compositional meanings has given this framework wide recognition among researchers interested in visual semiotics. This study analyzes and compares two images depicting an ethnically nuanced Moroccan marriage festival in the Amazigh town of Imilchil in the heart of the High Atlas Mountains. The first image is sourced from a ministry-mandated EFL textbook, *Ticket to English* for first-year baccalaureate students (Hammani et al., 2018), and the second one is from an online news media outlet (Morocco World News, 2024). Both images depict the same event, but they adopt two different visual semiotic choices and degrees of complexity.

This comparative study is not intended to decide which image is more attractive or authentic but to systematically explore how some visual elements, such as the participants, gaze, gestures, artifacts, and the overall arrangement, either boost the educational potential or restrain it. Throughout this study, the researchers highlight the value of multimodal discourse analysis as a tool for educators and textbook designers who engage in the process of cultural adaptation and localization of materials.

The findings of this study reveal that certain visual depictions, like the communal depiction, layered symbolism, overlapping of realism and abstraction, and situated actions, are more suitable to communicate comprehensive cultural meanings that would serve for pedagogical applications. By adopting Kress and Van Leeuwen's framework, eventually, this work aims to equip practitioners with a thorough approach to curating educational visuals, ensuring the promotion of intercultural interactions, identity formation, and student engagement.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The researchers' adoption of the aforementioned theoretical foundations helped perform the analysis and interpretation of educational visuals in this study. Central to the inquiry is the social semiotic perspective on meaning-making in visual communication, as articulated by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen's framework of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). This framework is selected for its capacity to reveal the underlying representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions embedded in visuals. These metafunctions are of crucial importance in textbook adaptation and curriculum design for multicultural contexts.

### **2.1. Kress and Van Leeuwen's Three Metafunctions**

At the heart of the analytical framework used in this study are the three metafunctions that Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) identify as central to visual communication:

#### **a. Representational Metafunction**

The representational metafunction explores what and who is depicted in the image, be it people or objects, their actions and attributes, and the constructed narrative or conceptual relations. Narrative processes are concerned with depictions of events or actions, as well as vectors of movement and interaction. Conceptual processes are concerned with classification, analytical relationships, and symbolism. This metafunction allows researchers and educators to analyze how images serve as representations of reality, embedding cultural codes and social values.

#### **b. Interactive Metafunction**

The interactive metafunction sets a relationship between the image and the viewer(s). It examines the direction of participants' gaze and the relationships between offer and demand. The size of the frame should also be considered, as close-up shots, medium, or long ones

engender feelings of intimacy, social warmth, or indifference. Along with that, perspective plays a crucial role in getting the viewer involved in or detached from the depicted act. Modality is another important specificity to consider as it addresses the degree of realism or abstraction, color, brightness, and richness of detail. These features establish emotional engagement, involvement, and the kinds of “invitations” extended by the image to its viewers.

### **c. Compositional Metafunction**

The compositional metafunction considers how elements are organized to form a coherent whole. Information value, for instance, is considered because the placement of elements brings about impressions of novelty, assumptions, realism, and ideals. Saliency is also addressed because visual prominence could draw attention to elements via color, size, and focus. In addition, framing is to be considered because the use of boundaries, space, and overlapping can connect or separate elements. This metafunction reveals how the arrangement and emphasis within an image structure meaning and guide the viewer’s interpretation.

## **2.2.Relevance to this Study**

This study moves beyond a superficial evaluation of visual attractiveness or clarity by grounding analysis in Kress and Van Leeuwen’s framework. It systematically investigates how images satisfy the representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions to communicate nuanced cultural messages and educational value. The study also demonstrates how MDA could help educators and textbook designers make more informed, purposeful choices, ultimately advocating for visuals that invite deep engagement, foster intercultural dialogue, and contribute to identity formation in the classroom.

## **3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

### **3.1.Research Design**

The researchers employed a qualitative comparative content analysis through the lens of Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2006) multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) to decipher the visual design specificities of two visuals portraying the Imilchil wedding festival. This method is chosen for its acknowledged capacity to dissect and interpret the complex layers of visual design, especially within educational and cultural contexts.

### **3.2.Data Collection**

Two images were purposefully selected based on their representational significance and their differing socio-semiotic origins. The first image is a photograph from *Ticket to English* (Hammani et al., 2018), a textbook for EFL instruction for first-year baccalaureate students mandated by the Moroccan Ministry of Education. The second one is a photograph sourced from the Morocco World News website (Morocco World News, 2024), depicting the Imilchil Marriage Festival. Both images illustrate the iconic Amazigh wedding in the High Atlas but vary in composition, participant representation, and semiotic richness. Choosing an institutionalized image and a mediated one enables a comparison of approaches to cultural narration in educational resources. The images were retrieved from publicly accessible and properly credited sources to ensure full data transparency.

### **3.3.Analytical Procedures**

The study proceeded with an initial observation as each image was examined to identify prominent elements, participants, actions, settings, and artifacts. Then, for each image, representational, interactive, and compositional meanings were analyzed in turn, referencing visual semiotic codes and supported by descriptive evidence. Interpretive memos were written for each metafunction, relating visual forms to possible cultural, social, or educational significations. In addition, findings for each metafunction were compared across both images, illuminating how textual and media images construct meaning differently. The implications for educational curation were derived from this synthesis.

### 3.4. Ensuring Validity and Reliability

Codes and interpretations were checked against the original framework descriptions and reviewed by an ELT supervisor and a co-researcher familiar with Kress and Van Leeuwen's model. The researchers also maintained a reflexive journal to note potential biases and document interpretive decisions. Eventually, the full coding process and analytic decisions are reported to enable replication or critique.

## 4. MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST IMAGE:



Figure 1: Imilchil Wedding Festival

Note. From Ticket to English (p. 110), by M. Hammani, S. Ahssen, & L. Tansaoui, 2018, D.I.O EL HADITA. (Original work published 2006).

### 4.1. Representational meaning

#### 4.1.1. Narrative processes

##### *a.1. Action processes*

The image invests narrative processes to capture the vivid interactions between participants that create a sense of movement and action. The viewer can enjoy these processes through "Vectors" that are formed by gestures, body orientation, and characters' gaze (Harjunpää et al., 2023). The image portrays two "actors" lining up: a man and a woman in their Amazigh attire. They appear to be rhythmically clapping in a ritualistic context, representing the vector, or the dynamic movement. The absence of a goal widens the margin of interpretations, as the viewer might mistake the event for something other than a wedding festival.

##### *a.2 Reaction processes:*

Reaction processes invest gaze vectors to connect the "Reacter," the depicted participant that initiates the action of looking or perceiving, to the "Phenomenon," the participant or object who are targeted with the gaze (Thompson & Suzuki, 2014). Both individuals or "reactors" direct their gaze slightly forward with solemn facial expressions. Their composure is that of observance of tradition rather than ceremonial joy. The absence of a "goal" renders the viewer perplexed regarding the purpose behind the celebration.

##### *a.3 Mental/speech processes:*

Mental processes add more depth to the visual narrative through depictions of participants delving into the act of thinking, feeling, or perceiving. These acts are subtle and can be difficult to decipher, but they can still be deduced from facial expressions, body

language, and symbolic elements. The poised stance of the two actors, as well as the anticipation, solemnity they inspire, suggests subtle mental processes (Cutting & Armstrong, 2018); hence the restrained display of emotions that is often indicative of a high degree of formality and deference to imposed communal values over individual emotions (Vaage, 2010).

#### ***a.4 Circumstance and context:***

Narrative processes depicted in visuals are enriched with circumstances and context that give more information to the viewer, hence promoting understanding and relatedness with the depicted actions and interactions (Cho et al., 2018). The emphasis lies on the two "actors" as the backdrop is blurred, making it difficult to situate the event. However, the clothing and artefacts help position the depiction within the context of an Amazigh solemn celebration.

#### ***a.5. Conceptual processes:***

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) enriched their framework with three main conceptual processes: classificational, analytical, and symbolic. These processes can be pinpointed in the provided image as they enrich the meaning conveyed.

### **4.1.2. Classification**

The man's white turban and robe (Jellaba), as well as the woman's striped cape and colorful headscarf and tassels, classify both actors as members of an Amazigh community: The Ait Hdidou tribe (Petty & Benbouazza, 2020).

### **b.2 Analytical processes:**

Analytical processes are concerned with how constituents build up a larger system. In fact, in the case of the provided image, possessive attributes, or "Parts," along with the carrier, or the "Whole," act in minimal synergy to convey meaning. The elements making up the actors' outfits function as constituent parts that reveal the ethnic identity, but no allusion to the larger context, which is a communal wedding celebration (Dogbe, 2003).

### **b.3 Symbolic processes:**

Symbolic processes tackle the significance of participants or artifacts and are usually apparent in symbolic qualities. These processes play an important role in depicting the meaning conveyed by the image. On the one hand, the man's white outfit connotes purity, festivity, and celebration of new beginnings, as it is the tradition in North African cultures. On the other hand, the woman's striped and colorful garments represent communal belonging (Vélez-Gómez, 2010). The aligned stance of the actors carries symbolic weight as it indicates equal roles in ritual participation, and by extension, the complementary gender roles of the couple in the traditional Amazigh community.

### **4.2. Interactive meaning:**

Kress and Van Leeuwen define "Interactive meaning" as the relation between the "represented participants," or the depicted figures in the image, and "interactive participants," or the viewer(s) of the image. According to the authors, this bond is determined by elements like contact, size of the frame, perspective, and modality, which also affect the communication between the represented and interactive participants (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

#### **A. Contact:**

Contact, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), eludes to the represented participants' gaze and whether it is off-frame or directed toward the interactive participants, and can be categorized into two types: demand, in case of direct contact, and offer, in case of gazing off-frame (Dewi et al., 2020). The image at hand exhibits a mixture of offer and demand as the man's look is directed away from the viewer, and the woman looks directly at the camera, rendering it an invitation to observe and interact. The effect is ethnographic as the viewer

witnesses a ritual and tries to learn from it. However, a lack of richness in the backdrop and the close-up frame limits the interactive potential of the photograph.

**B. Size of the frame:**

The social distance between the "represented" and "interactive" participants can be influenced by the size of the frame. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), framing comes in various types: a close-up, medium shot, and long shot. The close-up shot brings more attention to the facial composure, bodily expressions, and attire. The viewer's attention is brought into the composed collaboration, focusing on the personal and the particular rather than the collective. In educational contexts, this would allow for close study of attire and gestures, but less so of the intended context: The Imilchil wedding festival (Yu, 2019).

**C. Perspective:**

Perspective refers to the vantage point and position used to depict the represented participants. It has an influence over the viewer's attitude toward the image as a whole and the participants in particular. Accordingly, the viewer can't help but identify with the represented participants as equals or look down upon them (Prytz et al., 2011). The shot at hand is taken from the front at eye level, which places the viewer on the same social plane as the "actors" for more involvement. The shot also endows the participants with more dignity and less exoticism in the portrayal, though a medium shot would have enriched the viewer's interpretation with more narrative and conceptual processes.

**D. Modality:**

Modality refers to the degree of realism or abstraction depicted in the image. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), it is set by aspects like color, detail, depth, dimensionality, and tonal shading. Through the image's level of modality, the viewer can assess the image's credibility and affective power (Ravelli & Leeuwen, 2018). The level of modality in the image is rather fair, as the contrast between the man's bright white outfit and the woman's colorfully saturated garments brings more distinctiveness. More gestures, artefacts, and participants, however, could have enriched the context and brought more depth.

**4.3. Compositional meaning:**

Compositional meaning refers to the arrangement of the different components comprised in an image and how it forms a logical and significant unit while leveraging representational and interactive meanings. This composition is attained through three interlinked factors: information value, salience, and framing (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006).

**a. Information value:**

Information value refers to the assimilation of the significance of assigning certain components of the image to certain areas: left and right, top and bottom, or center and margins of the image itself (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). The framing exhibits symmetry and centrality, which connotes equality and balance between the two actors and aligns with the overall context, which is the Imilchil wedding festival, where the community celebrates the union of a man and a woman as they embark on a new chapter of their lives (Kohli & Suri, 2002). However, a richer depiction with elements at the top and bottom of the photograph would have endowed it with "ideal" and "real" additions that would enrich the narrative and information value. Also, the "new" and "given" interpretations would not apply as the two participants are not depicted as groom and bride, but performers in an "Ahidous" band.

**b. Salience:**

The concept of salience refers to the manner certain elements in the image attract the focus of viewers through the following aspects: size, color, clarity, and position. The arrangement of these elements, along with their salient features, is also crucial for the

attractiveness of the image (Clarke et al., 2013). The viewer's attention is drawn to the white robe and the multicolored garments as the most salient artefacts in this minimalist depiction.

**c. Framing:**

Framing in visual communication refers to the use of tools that connect or separate the different elements constituting an image. These tools can include lines, empty space, or overlapping and can act in their turn as cohesive devices linking the different elements depicted in the image in one single mesh, or separating them from one another distinctly (Teng & Sun, 2002). The close-up shot at hand sets the actors apart from the external context of the overall marriage celebration, which could deprive the viewer of a rich interpretation and appreciation of the event and its values.

**5. MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND IMAGE:**



Figure 2:  
Imilchil Festival: A Mountainside Celebration of Love in Morocco's Atlas Mountains

Note. From Imilchil Festival: A Mountainside Celebration of Love in Morocco's Atlas Mountains, Morocco World News, 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2024/02/23220/imilchil-festival-a-mountainside-celebration-of-love-in-moroccos-atlas-mountains/>

**5.1. Representational Meaning**

**a. Narrative Processes**

**a.1 Action processes**

The picture captures a couple of individuals and groups as well; two figures in the upper section and a group of musicians in the lower one. Both sections comprise action processes. The upper part illustrates an action process through an intimate interaction where one actor, a male figure, stretches his right hand like a vector pointing at a female figure, or the "Goal," which in return looks back at the actor with a smile, signifying that she consents to complete the transactional action. The depicted interaction embodies a reciprocal exchange, conveying sentiments of affection, esteem, and shared identity. The gesture of the male figure can be interpreted as a symbol of generosity or benediction, while the welcoming and joyful facial

expression of the female figure suggests a reciprocation or acceptance of this gesture (Atkinson & Titmuss, 1970).

The lower section illustrates an action process through an enacted and performed communal rite as seen in the performers' dancing and playing traditional musical instruments. The "Goal" is the collective action itself, as the musicians are not engaging with external participants; instead, they are contributing to the collective festivity. The tambourine "Bendir", along with other instruments and the musicians' body movements, form suggested vectors regarding rhythm and motion. In this section, the action processes also focus on the shared entertainment and cultural importance of the event, as the coordinated and rhythmic dancing inspires social harmony within the group (Fitch, 2016).

### **a.2 Reactional Processes**

The reactional processes are subtle but significant in this image. The upper section depicts gaze interactions between the man and woman. Both participants gaze at the intimate bond that their stretched hands create, emphasizing the emotional and relational bond between them. The gaze interaction and the almost-accomplished hand-holding enrich the narrative process as it underlines the intimate contact between those two characters. More than that, instead of gazing at each other, the two participants' gaze is directed toward a focal point, their stretched hands, adding a sense of modesty, decency, and reserve to the intimate interaction as mandated by the local social norms.

The lower part initiates an interaction where the reactor, who is the perceiver of the image in this section, is invited to watch the collective festivity performed by the group of musicians, or the "phenomenon". The placement of the musicians and the musical instruments form vectors in this image that lead the observer's gaze across the scene. The reactional process depicted in this part of the image invites the viewer to join the celebration and be a part of this cultural event (Clark & Ando, 2014).

### **a.3 Mental / Speech Processes**

The upper part of the image depicts non-verbal communication between the man and woman. Their reciprocal extending of the hands to meet at a focal and centralized point symbolizes agreement, affection, and intimacy. On the other hand, the lower part of the image depicts some verbal processes as performers are chanting and playing hand-held tambourines, "Bendir." The "Ait Hdidou" tribes usually summon "Ahidous" bands to perform in such cultural and communal celebrations. The viewer can't help but recall the "Ahidous" chants after noticing the verbal and non-verbal processes depicted in the lower section. The performers commemorate the ancestry, continuity, bond with nature, and overall wisdom of the Amazigh tribe of Ait Hdidou (Petty & Benbouazza, 2019).

### **a.4 Circumstances and Context**

The traditional attire, Jellabas, capes, and turbans, along with the musical instrument "Bendir" used by the performers and their arrangement in a line in the lower part, give the event a cultural dimension with ethnic specificities. The heart-shaped tree plays a significant role in manifesting the nature-related themes chanted by the Ahidous performers, enhancing the feeling of belonging that should link the two participants in the upper section with the community members depicted at the bottom. Along with that, the tree has the role of linking the intimate celebration with the communal one, and the bright red color adds more emphasis to the fact that it is a celebration of love, union, and continuity of the community (Susanti et al., 2022).



## **b. Conceptual Processes**

### **b.1 Classificational Processes**

From a classificational lens, the researchers can recognize a specific Moroccan ethnic group at the lower section of the image, the Amazigh of the "Ait Hdidou" tribe. The classification was based on the traditional clothing that is displayed in the image: white "Jellabas" and turbans, striped garments, as well as the use of instruments like the tambourine "Bendir." Through classificational processes, all the participants in the depiction are grouped according to their cultural and ethnic affiliation. Also, the harmony they emanate through their unified attire, alignment, and implied moves inspires belonging and togetherness.

In the upper section, the two participants are depicted in a manner that conveys traditional gender norms. The overlapping of the man's stretched hand and then the woman's confirms the local cultural norms related to relationships and marriage, especially the support that husbands are supposed to provide and the endorsing stance of wives toward their partners (Andaloussi, 2022).

### **b.2 Analytical Processes**

The depicted "Ahidous" performers represent an ethnic marker for the viewer to recognize the concerned ethnic community. The male performers are dressed in white or beige Jellabas, turbans, and capes, and they use the tambourine "Bendir" as a musical instrument. The women are also covered in black and white striped capes and clap along in a rhythmic harmony. In this case, the special attire and tambourines that are usually used in "Ahidous" performances act as possessive attributes or "Parts," and the performers act as carriers or "Whole" all in a mesh depicting a particular ethnic community (Becker, 2007).

On the other hand, the heart-shaped tree represents a carrier as its size and bright red color act as its possessive attributes, making it embody love and emotional bonds. The scene is, indeed, divided into two different but interlinked sections; thanks to the different possessive attributes, the viewer can process the progression from the intimate interaction at the upper section and the communal celebration of continuity and belonging at the bottom.

### **b.3 Symbolic Processes**

The heart-shaped tree in the center of the image carries great symbolism thanks to its considerable proportion and bright red color. The red heart is a metaphor for love, and the tree is one for generosity, union, and continuity, clarifying the bond between the two participants at the top. While it carries the aforementioned symbolism, it also serves as a link between the private and public aspects of the image (Prell, 1985).

On the other hand, the alignment of the performers in the lower part of the picture serves as a symbolic attribute that represents equity, togetherness, and belonging. The performers' clothes are not only functional but also have a certain symbolic significance, which is related to rootedness, culture, and communal heritage. The musical instruments, like the tambourine or "Bendir", are a representation of the traditional heritage that is associated with the celebration of this particular event. This shows that music and rhythm are vital elements that can create a feeling of togetherness among people (Witulski, 2016).

The man's extended hand and the woman's smile and overlapping stretched hand are also symbolic attributes that depict their roles in this relationship. The man's gesture can be interpreted as one of a gift or as initiating feelings of affection, while the woman's gesture and facial expression show happiness, thankfulness, consent, and emotional attachment. All these

symbolic attributes capture the themes of love, respect, and partnership that are present in the intimate depiction (Peyron, 1999).

## **5.2. Interactive Meaning**

### **a. Contact**

In the image at hand, all the represented participants are not directing their gaze toward the viewer. The two participants at the upper section are directing their gaze at each other while the performers in the lower section seem to be immersed in the festivity. The contact in this image is that of an offer. The "represented" participants in this depiction are not directly engaging with the "interactive" ones, which means they are showcased as targets of observation. The absence of direct gaze renders the viewer an observer of the event as if he or she is a member of the audience, which puts more prominence on the depicted private interaction at the top and the festivity at the bottom (Dewi et al., 2020).

### **b. Size of Frame**

The upper section of the image is depicted through a close-up frame showing the two participants in an intimate interaction. On the other hand, the lower section depicts "Ahidous" performers from a medium range, which allows the observer to enjoy the performers' attire and instruments as well as the garments of the female participants. The medium shot is the best frame to capture the full scope of the festivity, allowing the viewer to enjoy a comprehensive experience of the communal celebration (Yu, 2019). The contrast created by the close-up at the top and the medium shot at the bottom enriches viewers' interaction with the image. The feeling of intimacy and exposure to a communal celebration creates an interesting duality that adds more depth by making the viewer observe from two distances and probe into the generalities and specificities of the celebration (Yu, 2019).

### **c. Perspective**

The choice of the horizontal angle decides whether the interactive participants want, or are wanted, to be equal to the represented ones or not. The frontal view of the performers in the lower section of the given image assigns the viewer to the position of an observer or a part of the audience of the displayed festivity.

The vertical angle, on the other hand, decides the hierarchical relations between the viewer and the represented display, confirming or resisting power dynamics. The participants are depicted at an equal vantage point as the viewer in the two sections of the image. This alignment contributes to sustaining the observatory and participatory inclusion of the interactive participants in the private and communal celebrations, respectively (Prytz et al., 2011).

### **d. Modality**

Realistic images that are proportionate and endowed with detailed textures and realistic colors are said to have high modality. The lower section of the image can be described as such because of the realistic depiction of the participants, traditional clothing, artifacts, and musical instruments, making it an authentic cultural/ethnic representation.

Images with a high degree of abstraction, exaggeration, and symbolism are said to be of low modality. The upper section of the image is a mixture of high modality because of the realistic depiction of the two participants and low modality due to the placement of the bright red heart-shaped tree between them, symbolizing love, union, and passion.

This mixed modality adds more depth and cohesion to the narrative, helping the viewer to process the event as a celebration of the union between two members of an ethnic community while situating it within a cultural event. The mixture of high and low modalities serves the interaction between the represented participants and interactive ones as it amplifies the emotional engagement and cultural implications sought after through this image (Ravelli & Leeuwen, 2018).

### **5.3.Compositional Meaning**

#### **a. Information Value**

In the image at hand, the positioning of the different elements is a conscious one in order to relate to the displayed event and the cultural symbolism that it should emanate. The vertical display creates a coherent narrative development starting from a depiction of the intimate, or "Ideal," to the collective, or "Real," emphasizing the notion of belonging and relatedness. Along with that, the horizontal contrast sets a balance between feelings of affection between the two participants and decency and conservatism as set by tradition and social dictates.

The upper section of the image, or the "Ideal," displays an interaction between the two participants concerned with this cultural/ethnic celebration. The "Ideal," according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), is linked with abstraction, emotionality, and symbolism. The proximity characterizing the two participants reflects emotions of love, consent, union, and attachment, emphasizing the ideals of the depicted celebration. On the other hand, the lower section of the image, or the "Real," which is usually associated with realism, practicality, and sensory signs, depicts a group of performers, "Ahidous," engaged in the celebration, bringing the whole image closer to a real-life situation.

In the center of the image, the heart-shaped tree acts as the focal point, and the link that assembles all the other depicted acts in one mesh. It symbolizes love, union, and continuity, implying the bond between the two participants at the top and their affiliation with the community depicted in the lower section.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) coined the elements depicted on the right section of the image the "New" as they reflect aspects that are unfamiliar to the viewer. The male participant represents the novelty in this depiction. Conversely, the left side of the image is coined the "Given" as it represents the existing information. This interpretation aligns with the depiction of the man's containing and offering stretched hand and the woman's receptive one, as well as her consenting smile. It is also confirmed through the social expectations of the man's proactive role as the "New" or the one who asks for the woman's hand, the "Given" (Chapell et al., 1999).

#### **b. Salience**

The most salient element in the picture is the heart-shaped tree in bright red color and central position. The fact that it is shaped like a heart adds to its symbolism, and the red color emphasizes the emotional load that it carries, rendering it a cohesive device to ease the assimilation of the relationship between the two participants while captivating the viewer's attention.

The man and woman depicted at the top are also salient elements because of the contrast between them and the tree's bright red color. The close-up shot they are depicted through catches their gestures and emotions and makes them prominent, underscoring their intimate interaction at the same time (Bálint et al., 2020).

The Ahidous performers catch the viewer's attention through their alignment, traditional attire, and musical instruments. These elements inspire a feeling of motion, dynamism, and rhythm, which promotes the celebratory nature of the portrayed event. Their portrayal also serves as a cohesive device that helps the viewer assimilate the nature of the interaction between the two participants at the top. The man and woman share an intimate moment, but it's still regulated by communal norms as they are members of the portrayed ethnic group. This communal celebration is the culmination of the affective bond that unites the two participants with each other, and the ethnic bond that unites them with their community.

### **c. Framing**

The heart-shaped tree acts as a framing device that links the upper section with the lower one because of its red backdrop and symbolism. In fact, the overwhelming red color in the background unifies all the elements in the entire visual composition. The central position emphasizes the cohesive role of the tree, and the shape of an abstracted heart clarifies the nature of the relationship linking the intimate interaction at the top with the communal celebration at the bottom (Yang, 2018). The space surrounding the tree emphasizes its salience and gives it more cruciality compared to other components of the image. Moreover, the alignment of the Ahidous performers also plays the role of a separation device while enriching the narrative and adding communal and ethnic engagement in the wedding ceremony so as to emphasize the feelings of belonging.

All in all, the use of different framing strategies in the image allows for a satisfying level of harmony between unity and isolation and strikes a balance between the private and the communal on the one hand and the realistic and the abstracted on the other.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This comparative analysis examined how the informed curation of educational visuals, undertaken through the lens of Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis, can enrich the pedagogical and cultural value of textbook visuals. By systematically contrasting images from an EFL textbook and an online news website depicting the Imilchil wedding festival, the study reveals that the depth and complexity of visual communication depend not merely on the presence of culturally relevant content, but on how representational, interactive, and compositional elements are orchestrated to tell a rich and meaningful story.

While the image from the news website demonstrates narrative richness through layered symbolism and rich composition, this doesn't render it ideal for all educational settings. Its representational, interactive, and compositional complexity might pose certain interpretive challenges, especially for students who are unfamiliar with its specific cultural iconography. Conversely, the textbook image, through simpler representational depth, can still have effective educational applications if appropriately scaffolded and accompanied by explanatory captions, guided questions, or classroom discussion activities.

The application of the multimodal discourse analysis framework proved indispensable in unveiling these differences, allowing for a nuanced evaluation that reached well beyond surface-level description. The framework's three metafunctions offered a systematic and practical guide for deciphering how visuals narrate cultural events, establish relationships with students, and structure educational content. Eventually, this research reinforces the argument that the semiotics of visuals deserve as much attention as textual content in curriculum planning. Textbook publishers and authors are encouraged to collaborate with cultural experts and visual semioticians to ensure authenticity and inclusivity in visual materials, thus

supporting a learning environment where diversity is celebrated, and every student can identify with the stories told through images

Pedagogically, these findings signal an urgent need for educators, textbook designers, and curriculum developers to move beyond a superficial approach to image selection. Curating visuals should involve a thorough examination of how images represent narrative processes, foster interactive engagement, and organize meaning compositionally. Selecting images that offer narrative depth, shared perspective, and rich symbolism can stimulate curiosity, promote identity formation, and develop students' intercultural competence. Teacher training programs and professional development initiatives should also include modules on visual literacy and multimodal analysis so that in-service and future practitioners are well-equipped to evaluate and use images effectively.

### **6.1. Practical guidelines for EV curation**

Given the specific nature of visual semiotics, the researchers propose a practical checklist leveraging Kress and Van Leeuwen's three metafunctions to support the aforementioned stakeholders in curating EVs.

#### *Representational Metafunction*

- Does the image depict action or interaction between the participants rather than static and isolated individuals?
- Are relationships like roles, hierarchies, or communal rapports visually apparent and culturally resonant?
- Are cultural symbols, artifacts, and settings displayed in a manner that enhances the narrative?

#### *Interactive metafunction*

- Do depicted gazes, postures, or vectors like pointing or gesturing engender emotional engagement with the viewer?
- Is there a combination of realism and abstraction, and is it appropriate for students' cultural backgrounds and learning goals?
- Are the image's perspective (vertical or horizontal) and frame (close-up, medium, or long shot) conducive to more focus on the details, context, and social relationships?

#### *Compositional metafunction*

- Are key elements in the depiction salient (positioned, colored, or sized in a manner that draws attention to the learning objectives)?
- Does the layout (left/right, top/bottom, or center) attract the viewer's attention purposefully?
- Are the depicted elements (people, places, or artifacts) bonded seamlessly or unduly fragmented?

## **7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The study's scope, limited to two images, invites caution in generalizing its conclusions. Visual interpretation is inherently subjective, and richer insights could be obtained by involving a larger and more varied sample or by incorporating students' and teachers'

perspectives into the analysis. Future research might also examine the actual classroom effects of curated versus unstructured visuals on learner engagement, comprehension, identity construction, and intercultural competence.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

All images were used with full acknowledgment of their sources and for non-commercial, educational research purposes. Only publicly available images were used, no data about identifiable individuals were analyzed, and privacy concerns were minimal. Care was also taken to avoid misinterpretation or misrepresentation of cultural symbols and participants.

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