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Discuss how our understanding (as viewers) is shaped through choices in how the film is shot and what is said by whom

When we observe language activity in the various contexts in which it takes place, we find differences in the type of language selected as appropriate to different types of situation.

(Halliday et al.1964:87)

Unusually for Cormac McCarthy, one of America's preeminent literary novelists, *The Sunset Limited* that he directed is, in its entirety, one long and uninterrupted exchange of dialogue. Even McCarthy is a dramatist, there is no pure narrator in the film. The action that taking place in the film is only verbal. It seems that McCarthy tends to leave audience to a negotiate position in the argument. As such, McCarthy works hard to maintain a rhythm in the communication between B and W by keeping their banter as concise as possible. Mostly, the dialogue is slack. It is assumed that he deliberately made his language choice, given that language shaped to suit certain communicative purpose. Speaking of analyzing language in context, multimodality theory, a scholarly spin-off of social semiotic and systemic functional linguistics, is expected to be mentioned. This theory aims to formalize the socially situated nature of meaning – making practices. The notion of *mode* (or modality) designates each aspect of meaning-making resources from which participates have to choose in order to realize their communicative purposes through textual practices (Perez-Gonzalez 2014). Therefore, the paper is set out to discovering these deliberate meaning from different modalities and identifying roles from the use of language.

The first aspect is blocking. Blocking the scene simply means working out the details of actors' body movements in relation to the camera angle. At the very first beginning of scene1, there is a wide shot to displays the setting and establishes where the scene is taking place. It is noticeable that there is a Bible on the kitchen table, which may indicate that B is a Christian and set the stage for the following plot (B trying to prevent W

from committing suicide) and make explanation for the preceding plot (B saved W because he thinks God appoint him to be W's guardian angel). B break the silence with a question, and camera gradually zooms in, which indicate the communication begins and plot develops. Then camera move behind B to shooting W, which show that B is now dominating the floor since he begin the conversation. After the initial conversation, opinions are divided about B's feelings of responsibility for W. W accuse B of his behavior, because he is doing what he shouldn't do. At the same time, the camera keeps W's whole body in the frame rather than just frame his face so that the audience can notice that W's hands are moving in order to accompanying his speech. And W is point at B from time to time, so that he can make his argument more powerful and also make himself more confident and certain. Then, camera shifts to obscuring W and shifts to facing B. Every time the turn change, the camera frame will change back and forth. This kind of shot are composed in a staccato editing rhythm, which has the effect of intensifying the scene by creating pace and rhythm. It is clear that the usage of camera that coincides with what has been said can contribute to some additional meaning of what's taking place and help audience to understand the plot better.

Second, it is noticeable that there is a development of familiarity. Before the dialogue begin, the two characters, W and B are still strangers and waited to get familiar with each other. Camera opens with close-up shot of B and W's facial expressions. Although B is staring at W, W is looking at another place to avoid the eye contact with B, which indicate that he doesn't want to communicate with B. Camera then gives a close-up to W's hand, which is on table and lifted slowly. According to the behavior of W, it can be safely concluded that he is anxious. It is natural, people often feel anxious the first time he encounter a new genre: talking to a stranger who just prevented him from commit suicide. Although W might have a vague idea of what the situation involves, he is unaware of exactly which stages he need to complete, and in which order. W feels unsecure and that's why when B initiate the conversation and question W, W don't respond but question back. It indicated that neither them want to be the first one to give

information. In the latter communication, even though W answered B's questions, he mostly replied with one word, which shows that he doesn't allow the conversation developing. Comparing to the scene 2, when B ask W some private questions concerning his family, W answer these questions directly rather than question back. It seems that they become familiar with each other, given that W didn't resist to communicate with B any more. What's more, in scene2, W even provide some floor-holders like *yes* and try to keep the conversation going, which is seldom in scene1. In scene2, the two participants cooperate in a positive way.

Third, music does play a role in the film. There are three discoveries. First, at the beginning of scene1, when the two characters are in silence, music appears. It is worth pointing that the music is the same music at the end of scene3, when B finally decided to open the door to let W leave. It is assumed that music creates plot relationships through connecting prelude and coda together. Second, from scene 2, the relationship between B and W just like a psychologist and a patient. Therefore, when W lying on the couch and answer B's question, a slow tempo and peaceful music is accompanying their conversations, which make the scene more like a consultation. Last, at the beginning of scene 3, when W talking to B, he stands and behaves like he is lecturing to B. When he speeds up his speech, stirring music appears; when W improve his voice volume, music become louder too. In this case, music serves the theme of the movie by getting into the emotion of W.

Last but not least, posture can help audience to understand the plot too. In scene1, when B insisted to go with W, W seems very frustrated and handed his head. Interestingly, in scene3, when W is lecturing or, we can say, scolding B, B seems like a stupid student that didn't catch on what W's saying and he only respond. After W ask B *Can you understand me* several times, B handed his head. The same defeated posture indicates that roles are reversed. It seems that in scene1, the character B take control of the conversation, whereas in scene3, it is W that mainly pushes the story forward.

Due to the requirement of word count, this paper only analyze scene1 from

four aspects. It is concluded that when analyze the text in context, do not only focus on language, but all kinds of modalities and trying to figure out their functions.

References

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