

## Gender Difference in Sports Advertisements and Its Teaching Implications: A Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) Approach

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### Abstract

The study investigates the gender difference in 20 sports ads selected from 63 sports ads obtained from the Internet. The present study focuses mainly on interpersonal meaning of the selected sports advertisements and the findings have been used to develop teaching materials in this area.

The data analysis shows that men and women ads are different in a few areas, such as men are more likely portrayed as powerful, heroic, moving, and even religious images, while women are depicted as fashionable, sexy, charming and still images. Gender difference also exists in terms of the color, gaze, distance, angle, the size of frame, etc. Male and female images interact differently with verbiage found in the ads, for instance, metaphorical meaning is created by the interaction of text and image. In addition, the report concludes by considering the implications for teachers when using multisemiotic materials in order to scaffold students' learning. The study also proposed that a joint effort should be made to help teachers teach multisemiotics.

**Key words:** Gender difference; Systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis approach; Multisemiotic; Genre-based pedagogy; Multimodal genres

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

Literacy teaching has developed from traditional pedagogy to genre-based pedagogy in order to teach English by an approach that combines both process and product (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Genre-based pedagogy, which first appeared in Australia and then was introduced to L2 context, has been adopted to teach reading, writing, English for academic purposes, as well as some content subjects, for instance, history, starting from late 1980s (Martin & Rose, 2008; Coffin, 2006, 2003, 1997; Christie, 2005; Martin, 2003; Cadman, 2002; Unsworth, 2001; Callaghan, et al., 1993).

With the development of new technology and computer science, visual or aural elements are integrated into teaching and learning materials, and students have greater access to multisemiotic resources far more than before. In school subjects, both humanity and science, and probably all subjects, textbooks have become increasingly multimodal in the last 30 years (Unsworth, 2001). A limited number of studies have investigated the teaching approach of using multimodal materials in the classroom. However, as a recent innovation, there is still much about multisemiotic and pedagogic applications educators do not really understand and further research in this field in all subjects would be extremely valuable (e.g., Coffin & Derewianka, 2003; Guo, 2004; Unsworth, 2001; etc.).

Sports communication is a broad area, the present study focuses on sports ads and specifically multimodal elements, such as the linguistic and visual resources found in sports ads, which jointly construct the meaning making of such texts.

#### Research Objectives

In the present study, 20 advertisements are investigated and discussed with respect to the gender differences in sports advertisements. The purpose of the study is

to investigate the interpersonal meaning of male and female images in different advertisements and develop teaching materials, and more importantly, to provide useful suggestions to teachers and enable them to make use of these advertisements to teach English effectively. The findings from the study provide useful information about gender issues, which was incorporated into the design of the teaching material. In the present report, I focus specifically on the findings from the multisemiotic analysis and what such findings mean for pedagogy.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 1.1 Development of Literacy Approach

Approaches to literacy teaching have developed from a traditional curriculum to a genre-based approach over a long period of time (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Traditional pedagogy, based on the solidarity of classics of ancient Greece and Rome, taught students the objective knowledge of the world and stuck to moral and social ‘truth’ and its key elements were memorizing and rote learning of fixed rules. With the development of industrialization, practical activities and experiments became an integral part of schooling (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). The progressivist pedagogy, which emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, put students’ interest and intent first and encouraged them to question and use language for their own purposes. As a result, students and teachers shared the final authority in making curriculum decisions (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). However, traditional pedagogy and progressivist pedagogy were unable to meet students’ needs and did not accommodate themselves to the development of modern education (Callaghan et al., 1993). It is under such circumstances that a genre-based pedagogy emerged and was initially introduced during a literacy project named ‘write it right’ conducted in the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) in the Metropolitan East Region in Sydney, Australia, in 1988 (Martin & Rose, 2008; Coffin, 2003; Callaghan, et al., 1993). Within the last three decades, genre-based pedagogy has been fruitfully studied by a number of researchers (Martin & Rose, 2008; Christie, 2005; Coffin, 2006, 2003, 1997; Martin, 2003; Cadman, 2002; Unsworth, 2001; Callaghan, et al., 1993). Genre is defined as staged, goal-oriented social processes with characteristic grammatical features (Martin & Rose, 2008). Kress (2003, p.96) emphasizes in his account the term “genre is best used to describe an aspect of textual organization, namely that which realizes and allows us to understand the social relations of participants in the making, the reception and the reading/interpretation of the text”. Genre-based pedagogy has advantages over traditional curriculum and progressivist pedagogy: First, genre stresses the social context and communicative role of language; Second, language is considered as a social structure and this in turn structures language use. Genre-

based pedagogy is drawn from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which views language as a meaning making system people use to construct meaning to accomplish their goals in certain social context. That means text and context are intimately related in a SFL model of language. The relationship between text and context can be explained by three social functions of language: tenor, field and mode, and the three variables or elements constitute the register of a text type (Martin and Rose, 2008). A more flexible concept is to view genre not as an end product, but as the process that produces text types—a dynamic interaction of social participants and appropriate generic resources (Unsworth, 2001).

### 1.2 Genre-Based Pedagogy Across Disciplines

Genre-based pedagogy has been applied to teaching across curriculum and some research has been conducted to implement genre-based pedagogy in teaching and learning (Martin & Rose, 2008; Coffin, 2006, 2003, 1997; Christie, 2005; Martin, 2003; Cadman, 2002; Unsworth, 2001; Callaghan, et al., 1993). Christie (2005) examines the early years of primary school writing and adopts a genre-based approach to teach writing which stresses the communicative, purposeful and social functions. She recommends a few stages to follow when introducing students to a genre: showing schematic structure, deconstruction, joint construction, independent construction. She also summarizes some familiar genres of primary and second years, such as procedure, recount, discussion, narrative, report and explanation. Unsworth (2001) identifies a variety of genres in school subjects ranging from science to humanity. He argues that some genres occur more frequently than others in different school disciplines and also the use of particular genres varies across fields within subject areas. In Unsworth’s (2001) view, by understanding genres, students will be more prepared to comprehend, interpret, and manipulate texts in a purposeful way. He demonstrates that the language of subjects like science and geography are characterized by using technical terms which are placed in logical relations (order) to explain how things happen or come to be. The language feature of the humanities, however, is abstraction. The major categories of grammatical metaphor are nominalization in both areas, where a verb is changed into a nominal group, for instance, *involve* is replaced by *involvement*.

One example where knowledge is helping to inform pedagogy is seen through studies focusing on the humanities. Limited research has been carried out in history genres and history curriculum in Australia context (Martin & Rose, 2008; Coffin, 2006, 2003, and 1997). Coffin (1997) analyzes the language in history textbooks with regard to generic structure, register, lexicogrammar, and grammatical metaphor. She argues that students must develop the language specific to education genres they are studying in order to learn the subject successfully. In

the process of language development, students develop new ways of consciousness and new ways of knowing the past. Coffin (1997) explores the set of genres which enable students to expand their repertoire of meaning-making resources and participate in the process of learning how to mean like a historian. Following Coffin's model, we can better model language and text, if we can understand genres.

To date little research has been conducted into genres within the area of English through sports. Only one genre will be the focus of the present study, sport advertisements. This genre was selected as it is a genre commonly found in many contexts such as billboards, TV, magazines and internet advertisements. Advertisements are also a genre the students will probably be quite familiar with. In order to gain a better understanding of the genre, we need to look at the multimodal elements in texts, which is essential in a successful advertisement.

### 1.3 Multimodal Genres

Stöckl (2004a, p.9) defines multimodal as “communicative artefacts and processes which combine various sign systems (modes) and whose production and reception calls upon the communication to semantically and formally interrelate all sign repertoires present”. Starting from 1980s, textbooks and teaching/learning materials have shifted from densely printed pages to multimodal text across the curriculum with the development of new technology. Ways of teaching and learning have also been influenced by the changes, therefore, it is necessary to understand the “interrelated theoretical and practical understandings needed in negotiating changing contexts of text and image in the social construction of multiliteracies in classroom practice” (Unsworth, 2001, p.3).

There are some studies focusing on the issues arising from these changes (Bateman, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Unsworth, 2001). Genres are typically realized through more than one modality of communication (i.e. some combination of language, image, sound, action, spatial design, etc.) (Martin & Rose, 2008). Bateman's (2008) research extends the systemic-functional notion of genre from traditional, non-multimodal conceptions of register and style to more complicated, multimodal types dealing with multimodality from a non-linguistic approach. He states one can make predications concerning the generic structure, function and content of a genre from linguistically-motivated approach, so it is reasonable and possible to make predictions and understand how to construct texts from non-linguistically-motivated approach. Bateman (2008, p.225) demonstrates “it is important to pursue a notion of genre that admits fluidity and change while still imposing sufficient constraint to retain predicative value when semiotic modes combine.” If we adopt Bateman's position, as teachers, we can understand the multisemiotics of a text and then provide a scaffold to our students and support their learning of such texts.

Bateman (2008) further proposes the primary ‘resource’ that multimodal genre is built upon is page-flow, whose function is to combine elements appearing on a page including text, graphs, images and so on. It is of central importance for advancing the treatment of multimodal genre, as he said, “Characterizations of the visual properties of elements as well as their relative locations on the page may make equally valuable contributions to specifications of genre” (Bateman, 2008, p.204). He believes the spatial relationships have not yet received enough attention as a distinct semiotic mode. The deployment of page-flow as a meaning-making resource raises the issue of reading paths in that the spatial extension offers and encourages alternatives, which leads to a more ‘dynamic’ construction of a genre. Following this line of argument a genre remains a linear, staged, goal oriented activity, but the stages are not pre-given by the text, instead constructed by the reading path (Lemke, 2002; van Leeuwen, 2005). As van Leeuwen (2005, p.85) explicitly demonstrates: “the text itself is no longer a staged, goal oriented process. It is an environment for such processes, and must be analyzed as a kind of map, a spatial structure allowing a number of trajectories, or as the layout of a building, a spatial structure designed to facilitating a range of specific activities”. To support teachers' knowledge and their development of teaching material for students, reading path of sports advertisement is investigated following Bateman's semiotic model of analyses.

Apart from the reading path, when encountering multimodal genre, it is not only necessary to analyze the text, but also the visual ‘input’ and how readers proceed to interact with both verbal and visual elements (Bateman, 2008). This perspective is supported by van Leeuwen's (2005, p. 84) who calls for analysts to “study, not the structuring of the text, but the structuring of the reading (using) process”. Although researchers have made some progress in this area, there is still a need for more research.

Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)'s view, images may have similar functions like language in terms of the metafunction including ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. Unsworth (2001), Kress and Leeuwen (2006), Coffin and Derewianka (2007), O'Halloran (2008), Bateman (2008) among others adopt a meta-functional framework to describe visual grammar in terms of representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning which are analogous to metafunction. The visual grammar facilitates the development of visual literacy by providing resources to enrich students' learning experience in and out of classroom and expand teaching activities.

In sports advertising, images the most prevalent source of meaning making and will be analyzed in detail based on the metafunction of visual mode. Apart from images, color is another critical resource worth paying attention to as it is a commonly used technique in sports

advertisements. It is also a semiotic resource, along with language and image in multimodal texts. Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) demonstrate that color, similar to images, fulfills three meanings, ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings simultaneously. In addition, they believe that color can create affect and the meaning of color rests on association, in other words, the color is associated with the resources or carriers of that color, so decontextualization is necessary in analyzing the meaning of that color. In this paper, the color of the advertisement as a whole and the color participants wear will be discussed in terms of the interpersonal meaning that color creates.

#### 1.4 Multimodality in Printed Advertisements

Some studies have been carried out in the multimodal resources of the printed advertisements from a systemic-functional perspective (O'Halloran, 2008; Machin, 2004; Stöckl, 2004a; Bell & Milic, 2002; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; Lemke, 1998). O'Halloran (2008) demonstrates that the systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (SF-MDA) approach is effective in the analysis of ideational meaning in a printed advertisement. O'Halloran, (2008) applies the use of digital technology to image-editing software as a practical approach which can lead to a more detailed semantic and ideological interpretation of advertisements. In her research, she discusses how metaphorical constructions of meaning (i.e. semiotic metaphors) take place across verbal and visual elements. In sports advertisements, metaphor is frequently adopted to promote sports apparels and impress viewers. In my study, I will look at the metaphorical meaning with reference to O'Halloran's (2008) approach.

Cheong (2004) proposes a generic structure potential for printed advertisements incorporating visual and verbal resources. He explores lexicogrammatical strategies for the expansion of ideational meaning that occur through the interaction of text and images. Then Cheong develops a new vocabulary to discuss the strategies through the analysis of five advertisements which account for semantic expansions of ideational meaning in these texts. His research helps to interpret the ideational meaning of sports advertisements though my focus is not ideational meaning but interpersonal meaning, because it is necessary to understand the ideational meaning before you grasp the interpersonal meaning and they are interrelated.

Hasan (1996, p.41-42) proposes 'Capture Focus Justification' as the generic structure for an advertisement. Hasan (1996, p.41) aims to encapsulate the multi-semiotic nature of advertisements, with the Capture functioning: "to attract attention...and in the written mode through the management of the visual layout, the typeface patterns and/or the presence of pictures." The Focus 'singles out that which is being advertised'. The structure is helpful for learners to grasp a rough understanding of an advertisement and is the fundamental principle of analyzing an advertisement.

Stöckl (2004a) further addresses the theoretical and text-analytical issues of the language-image-link in printed media. Two sample advertising texts were analyzed to show that there are pictorial elements in language and linguistic elements in images. Based on his findings, he concludes that modes and sub-modes shift or blend (mode overlapping) and mix (mode mixing) in multimodal communicative events. My study will adopt Stöckl notion of semiotic principles across modes to analyze the sports advertisements selected to see how pictorial and linguistic elements interact with each other.

Studies have shown an increasing interest in examining the gender-related patterns in advertisements (Machin, 2004; Bell & Milic, 2002; Shields, 1999, 1997; Goffman, 1979). Bell and Milic (2002) demonstrate that gender stereotypes are still significant through an analysis of 827 advertisements from a representative sample of magazines. The empirical study implies that advertisements with female participants are often different from those with male participants in interpersonal and textual ways. For instance, women participants are more likely depicted in image-acts 'demanding' a relationship with the view rather than 'offering' something to the viewer. In terms of the findings from a textual perspective, they conclude that the left-right structure of printed advertisement is not sensitive to the gender of represented participants. The situation in sports advertisements with regard to gender difference remains unanswered. However, in the present study I suggest that there is a major gender differentiation in the multimodal choices found in sports advertisements.

Machin (2004) investigates representation of women in Getty image bank from the perspectives of mental state, posture and facial expression. He concludes that women images in Getty image bank are portrayed to cater to the core values of the corporate world. He argues that there is a well-organized and systematic catalogue of the values these images convey. For instance, freedom is the most often coded notion in these images. In the present study, I will argue that there is also a systematic catalogue of men and women representation in sports advertisements respectively and those systematic differences are formed because of the stereotypical views towards men and women.

#### 1.5 Research Objectives

O'Halloran (2008) and Cheong (2004) have observed the ideational meaning of the printed advertisement, though not specifically to sports advertisements, which are quite similar to other advertisements. Bell and Milic (2002) concludes in their study that left-right structure is not sensitive to advertisements from textual perspective. Interpersonal meaning is the least research area in advertisements, let alone sports advertisements. Thus, in this article, I will examine the interpersonal meaning of men and women images and hope to arouse more interest and research in this field in the future.

Based on the previous studies in genre-based pedagogy, teaching multimodal text and display advertisement, the present study aims to examine the interpersonal meaning in sports advertising with regard to gender difference and develop teaching and learning materials in this field and some suggestions will be provided for teachers about how to teach multimodal texts.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Collection of Multimodal Sports Advertisements

The present study focuses specifically on one unit—advertising, a sample of 63 sports advertising posters were collected from websites of different sports brands such as Nike, Adidas, Puma, and Reebok to investigate the common themes and how they can be used to teach English through sports advertising. All advertisements depict one male or female, or group of males, or an isolated part of the body (face, bottom, leg, hip, etc.). The selection draws on the following criteria: firstly, the texts contain multimodal elements. Secondly, the represented participants in the posters are humans. Thirdly, the poster should be successful and have a positive influence on the promotion of the brand. Finally, those texts selected can be categorized into different groups with common themes, but they are not balanced shared theme in each brand.

20 multimodal sports advertisements were selected from 63 sample texts. Among those, 9 advertisements are male participants in display and another 11 for females. The selected texts are the primary data for the further investigation on gender difference in sports advertising and how to employ these advertisements to teach English.

### 2.2 Analytical Frameworks

Qualitative data is analyzed by applying two frameworks. The basic functions of language are to make sense of our experience and act out or social relationships (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). In other word, language construes human experience through ideational meaning, textual meaning and interpersonal meaning, namely, metafunction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Some researchers demonstrate that not only language has the three metafunctions, but also images have the three meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Bateman, 2008).

#### 2.2.1 Bateman's Model (2008)

The qualitative data is analyzed by the GeM Framework proposed by Bateman (2008). The GeM model treats multimodal text as a multilayered semiotic artifact (Bateman, 2008). The framework is comprised by the following elements:

Content base: the content-related structure of the information to be communicated—including propositional content;

The GeM base: the basic elements physically presented on a page;

Layout base: the layout properties and structure including not only the individual elements but also their layout grouping and spatial proximity and their mutual spatial relationships.

Rhetorical base: a detailed account of the rhetorical relationships between the content expressed by elements on a page and their communicative purposes;

Navigation base: the elements that contribute explicitly to navigation and access in the page, supporting 'movement' around the document in various ways;

Genre base: a representation of the grouping of elements from other layers into generically recognizable configurations distinctive for particular genres or document types (Bateman, 2008, pp.19 &108)

Bateman's model is originally designed to analyze multimodal elements in documents; and this powerful tool will be adopted in the present study. Since all texts are sports advertisements and they belong to one genre—persuasive text, the last bullet point will be left off.

#### 2.2.2 Kress and van Leeuwen's Framework (2006)

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) develop a comprehensive visual semiotic theory based on Systemic Functional Linguistics. The model consists of three principal metafunctions of visual semiosis in relations to image:

The representational metafunction:

The dimension includes representation of narrative processes (goings on) and conceptual process (ideas) within the framework of the image. The former focuses on the links between participants, such as eyelines, gestures, and so on. The latter focuses on the part when participants are analyzed, classified or carriers of symbolic meaning when they depict visual elements.

The interactional metafunction:

The interaction between viewers and images is formed by factors such as gaze of the represented participants, distance of the participants and angle from which the participant is looked at by the assumed viewers.

Layout or compositional metafunction:

The position of depicted elements and formal relations between them in the frame are viewed as a signifier of its information value to each constituent respectively.

In this study, the interactional metafunction will be fully analyzed in each sample text, and touch a little on representational and compositional metafunctions.

It is significant to know the implications that the image is placed left or right on the advertisement. Information value will be discussed as stated by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p.87-94), left and right have specific information values. If the layout is horizontal, the elements positioned on the left of centre are presented as "Given", and the elements positioned on the right of centre are presented as "New".

### 3. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Findings of the Advertisement Analysis

An overview of the emerging patterns in male ads is summarized as the following categories. The first category includes three images with a common feature that a man's arms outstretch like a cross or wings implying metaphorical meanings (Ad 1, 2, 3). The second group is two advertisements whose focus is men's face or upper body (Ad 7, 8, 9). The last group is 3 posters with men doing sports, running (Ad 4, 5, 6). With regard to female texts, 4 types of themes are categorized. First, women's body is highlighted and used to attract attention (Ad 10, 11, 12, 13). Second, the body language of the female characters conveys sexual meaning (Ad 14, 15). Third, this category is more neutral with beautiful girls gazing at the viewers (Ad 19, 20). Fourth, women are doing sports, for example, running (Ad 16, 17, 18). Gender difference is visible and it leads to distinctive features about the affect men and women evoke in sports advertising. These emerging patterns will be discussed in detail in the following part.

##### 3.1.1 Findings of Men Advertisements

- Men's body is employed to express metaphorical meanings rather than just physically attractive. Participants could be presented in a symbolic or metaphoric way, which was usually achieved by formally highlighting one of their attributes for display and implying its similarity to something else, such as the shape of men's body is depicted as a cross with their arms outstretched implying a strong religious and powerful sense and functions metaphorically. The Michael Jordan Nike's ad (Ad 1) is a good example. The nominal group *wings* and the image create a metaphorical effect. He holds a basketball in his right hand, gazing at the viewer, who can feel that sports is like a belief and you have faith in it and you get freedom from it. In addition, Wayne Rooney's Nike ad (Ad 2) featuring him partially painted red with his arms outstretched is controversial in UK because some consider it aggressive and war-like. The image is successfully created in the sense of religion and power with strong affect on the audience. The red paint on the body can be seen to represent the English Saint George Flag and even the blood of battle. Another Nike ad (Ad 3) characterizes a man stretching out his arms and looking at the sky as if offering the viewer something unseen and mysterious, or even perhaps religious. There is a sentence *we are all witnesses*, which is complimentary with the image. The three sports stars in the above ads are like heroes.
- Although the naked upper body appears in men's ads (i.e. Wayne Rooney), it does not evoke

sex imagination but a feeling of enthusiasm, faithfulness, power, aggression to sports. When the represented participants look at the camera, the viewer can feel the firmness and determination, which is different from women's ads. Sports personalities are worshiped like heroes in these ads.

- Men are more frequently presented doing sports in advertisements than women. For instance, men are sometimes running or playing basketball, football, and so on. In a 'moving' pose, men's power, strength, and passion on sports are shown to viewers. From the 63 advertisements, there are 32 men advertisements, among which 9 ads depict men doing sports, while in 31 women ads, only 2 portrait women running.

##### 3.1.2 Findings of Women Advertisements

A blend conception of femininity and feminism can be seen from these ads.

- Female's body is utilized to make advertisements. The findings in the present study support Bell & Milic (2002, p.213) who state that "females are framed more intimately and be less likely to be represented at a public distance than men shown in advertisements". In the sample, for women, hips, legs or bums are shot at the intimate distance and the camera only captures a particular part of a body, which is exposed to the viewer to attract attention. The girl in Ad 12 is shot in full length from a long distance. Her long smooth shining legs are the most eye-catching object in the picture. One Nike poster (Ad 13) is an attractive, young, brown-skinned naked woman with a men's shoe on her knee, looking at the camera/viewer with a kind of seductive gaze. Female body is made use of sexually to sell men's sports products. It can be seen that female's body is one of the ways to sell a range of women or men's sports apparels. There is a tendency that women's body is more exposed to viewers when they are the represented participants of men's sportswear, compared to the situations when they are participants of women's products. Their body in such circumstances symbolizes sex, attraction, beauty, desire, and so on. Little linguistic elements are involved in such kind of posters.
- In addition to the body exposure to the viewer, women's posture as a still shot often appears in sports advertising. The female participants hold a sexual posture appealingly to highlight part of the body (Ad 14, 15). There is minimal linguistic text in these advertisements.
- Women's ads also have some conceptual types, where the human participant wears a sports shirt, stands still and gazes at the camera. This kind

of posters stress beauty, health and ‘demand’ the viewers to join them in sports. In the present study, two Nike images (Ad 16, 17) are about women running with the camera shooting from side angle. The represented participants are active, energetic, and enjoy sports, which may evoke viewer’s desire and interest in sports.

- Based on the findings in the present study, women’s sports wear is often regarded as fashion rather than for the purpose of doing sports. So we can see that most ads in the study are about women standing or posing still instead of doing sports. The effect of these ads is not to impress the viewer from the sports perspective but to impress from a fashion, beautiful, sexy kind of perspectives. Therefore, it could be argued that female ads are not directly related to sports products; and that is usually semiotically expressed through narrative images.
- Women’s ads are often depicted in rich colors, while men’s ads are more black and white. For instance, ad 11 and ad 14. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) state, color is used to stress or calm people down interpersonally, like in ad 11 and ad 14, pink and light blue make people relaxed and feel energetic. There are exceptions (Ad 16 and Ad 17), the two ads both portray women in ‘moving’ and the style is more like a men’s ad. The color of the two ads is black and white, denoting a sense of muscular.

### 3.2 Discussion

When teachers utilize the analysis to teach students, these materials mentioned above are good resources to raise the students’ awareness and learn how to construct meaning when reading images and texts.

The findings reveal that there is still a stereotype in terms of men and women images in sports advertisements. For instance, the sexual appeal of women ads is more common than men ads. When relating this particular feature to teaching, teachers can analyze the phenomena in terms of the gestures, postures and the clothes women wears, together with the angle, distance, size of frame and gaze of the participants.

The reading path of multimodal materials is overriding in that it determines the understanding of the interaction between visual and verbal elements, such as the image is Given or New, the image and text are positioned from left to right or from top to bottom. Apart from the information value, the relationship between the visual and verbal content and how to read images (ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning) are also significant in teaching multimodal texts. When teaching students how to read sports ads, take ad 1 for example, the layout of the ad emphasizes the image of Jordan, especially his outstretched arms, in other words,

the image is the salience of the ad, while above the image, and the viewer will find the word *wings*. This means the information value of the ad is from top to bottom, and text *wings* is considered as Given and image Jordan as New. The teacher can further explain that the image and the text interact to convey a metaphorical meaning of ‘flying, freedom, strength or even religion’. Sport advertising belongs to persuasive text type, so teachers can focus on the interpersonal meaning sports ads convey. For instance, the relationship between the represented participant and the viewer is worth investigating.

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## CONCLUSION

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A number of challenges have been encountered, when conducting this study. Within the field of applied linguistics, little is known about the language of sports communication and multimodality in sports advertising. More studies need to be conducted to extend the existing body of knowledge. The present study draws on a limited sample of sports advertisements, and as such the findings in this study are regarded as an initial investigation of sports communication. A larger sample of advertisements and a wider range of participants should be undertaken to make this study more reliable, valid and generalizable. In addition, beyond the field of sports communication, further research needs to be carried out to broaden the knowledge in teaching multimodal discourse in a range of disciplines.

### Implications to China

Multimodality is a completely new area for teachers. Though textbooks and other teaching materials are becoming increasingly multimodal, teachers are barely aware or even have the tools they need to teach multimodal texts. Such a lack of attention to multisemiotics as a meaning making resource is a pedagogical problem which needs to be addressed in China.

It was observed that teachers needed more assistance and guidance in teaching multimodal texts and sports communication. Firstly, teachers needed more training and practice to utilize different modes of meaning making, i.e. teachers lacked knowledge and the metadiscourse related to the meaning making resources of image and verbiage, and the teachers tended to talk about the images in what seemed to be a little superficial. Secondly, the underlying ideological issues of gender differences were not included at all. Part of the reason for overlooking this huge semiotic resource is that it has been taken for granted for a long time and little is known about how to teach these texts. I would argue that it appears that teachers, textbook designers, academics and other educators rarely regard multisemiotics as a meaning making resource. Consequently, there seems to be a knowledge gap in teaching multisemiotic resources.

Students showed an interest in multimodal ads in the observed class, and learning became more fun, interesting and motivating, but it is necessary to expand their understanding of multimodal texts. In recent years, advancement in information technology has helped students to learn multisemiotics in and out of classroom. In the present study, it was found that students and teachers had existing access to a wide range of sports ads and commercials on the Internet before even entering the classroom. They were familiar with such a text type, but seemed to lack the metadiscourse to discuss the meaning in detail

Explicit knowledge of reading multisemiotics can also prepare students for independent learning. As noted previously, the demands involved in the construction of multimodal texts are requiring more and more people to employ different modes within one text to construct meaning. Independent learning is becoming increasingly important in this information age. As educators, we need to engage with, and utilize texts, that reflect the current multiliteracy demands.

In China, how to help children from disadvantaged background in rural areas learn multisemiotics is a challenging issue, since such students would have limited access to computers and the Internet at home and in school. Their exposure to multimodal textbooks and reading materials is much less than children living in urban areas. Teachers in rural areas, like most other teachers, are rarely trained to teach multisemiotics. This will result in the phenomenon that when disadvantaged children enter universities, they will again be put in a difficult position to learn multisemiotics. There is still a long way to go before the problem can be solved. A collaborative effort should be a top priority for the Government, universities and schools to improve the educational situation in rural areas of China

### General Conclusion

To sum up, though the present study has its limitations to some extent, it provides initial knowledge about teaching multisemiotics in secondary school and also makes contributions to applied linguistics and English education.

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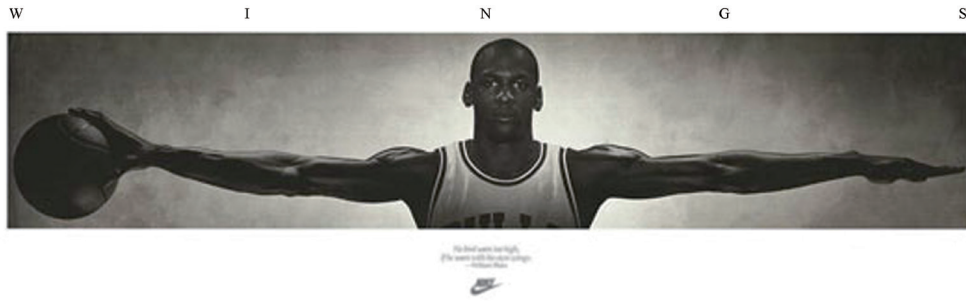
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Appendix :

1.



2.



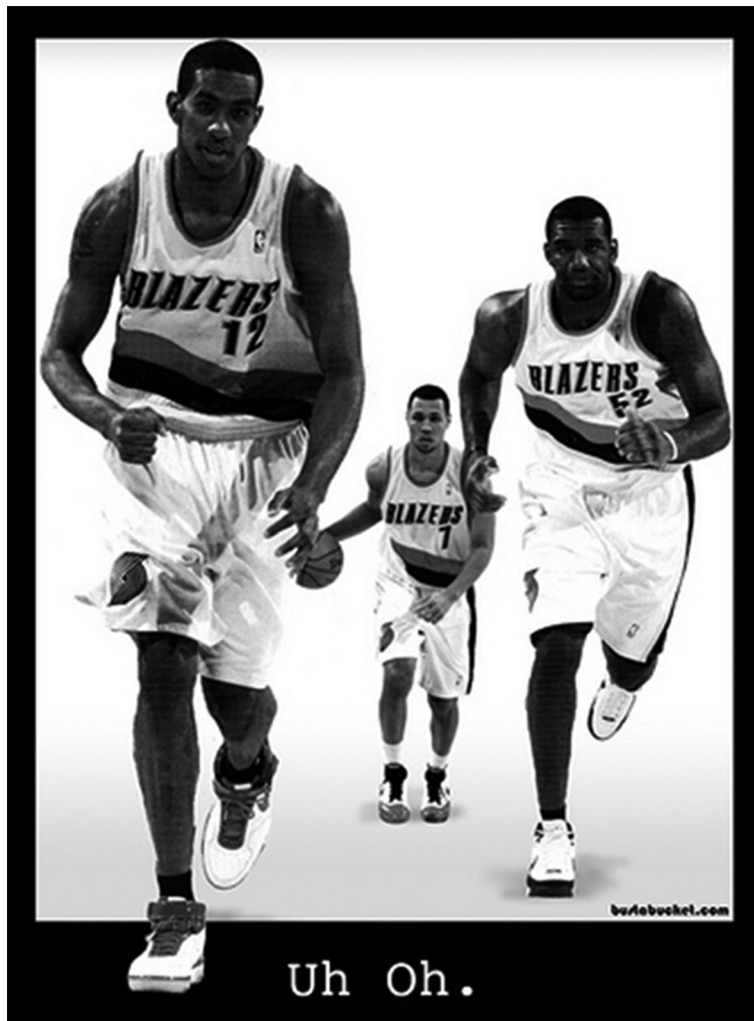
3.



4.



5.



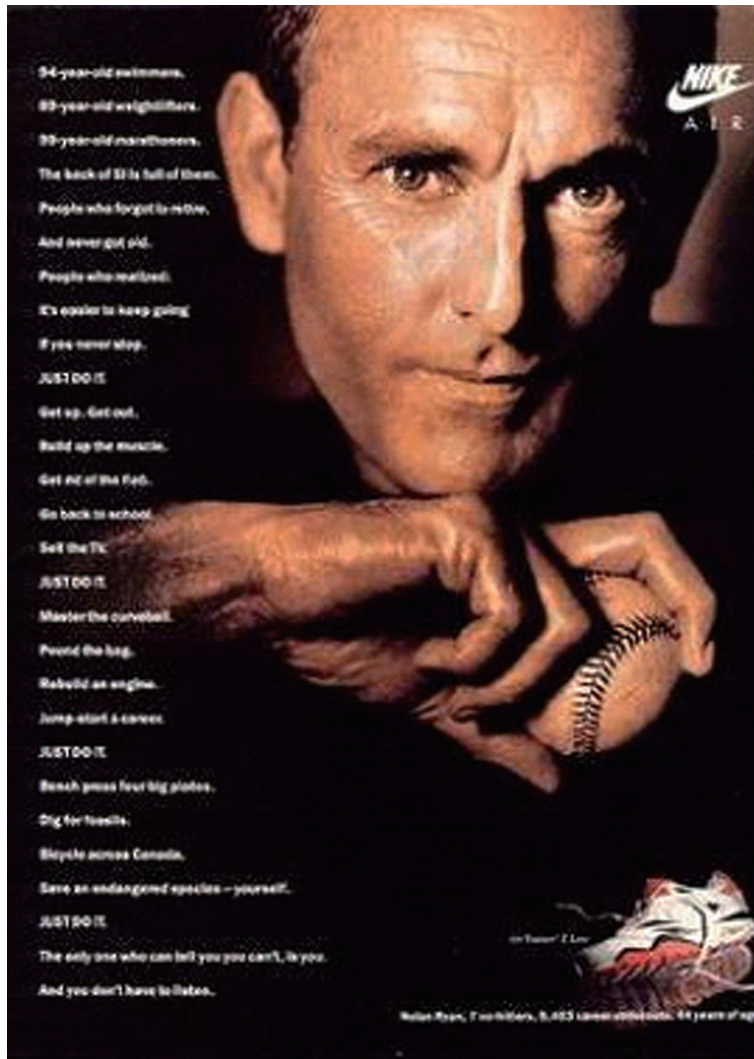
6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



**MY BUTT IS BIG**  
AND ROUND LIKE THE LETTER C  
AND TEN THOUSAND LUNGES  
HAVE MADE IT BOUNDER  
BUT NOT SMALLER  
AND THAT'S JUST FINE.  
IT'S A SPACE HEATER  
FOR MY SIDE OF THE BED  
IT'S MY AMBASSADOR  
TO THOSE WHO BALK BEHIND ME  
IT'S A BORDER COLLIE  
THAT HERDS SUNNY WOMEN  
AWAY FROM THE BEST DEALS  
AT CLOTHING SALES.  
MY BUTT IS BIG  
AND THAT'S JUST FINE  
AND THOSE WHO MIGHT SCORN IT  
ARE INVITED TO KISS IT.  
**JUST DO IT.**

NIKEWOMEN.COM

11.



**MY HIPS**  
**RETURN TO PUBERTY**  
WHEN EW IN DANCE CLASS  
MUSIC AFFECTS THEM LIKE HORMONES  
MAKING THEM CRAZY  
AND SPONTANEOUS  
AND OPTIMISTIC  
AND PRONE TO DRAMA  
AND I DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM  
AND SOMETIMES THEY  
DON'T UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES.  
WHEN THE MUSIC STOPS  
THEY'RE STILL CHARGED  
DON'T TOUCH ME  
SPARKS WILL FLY.  
**JUST DO IT.**

NIKEWOMEN.COM

12.



13.



14.



15.





16.



17.



18.



19.



20.

