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**A STUDY OF CARTOON TRAILERS IN ENGLISH FROM
THE PERSPECTIVE OF
MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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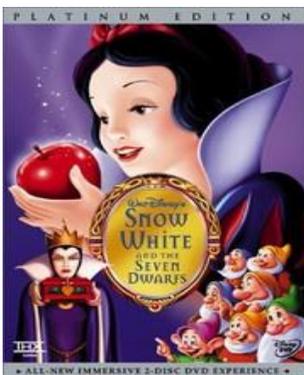
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

It goes without saying that cartoons are one of the essential parts of every childhood. They are, certainly, the most popular form of entertainment for children, but also much more than that.

Practically, the growth of main stream animation has changed the landscape of entertainment. There are hundreds upon hundreds of cartoons are released each year, so there is always a question that how to create a buzz for a film before it launches. That is the reason why they need a lot of advertising campaigns using all means of mass media. And trailers, therefore, are considered the most important marketing and publicity tool in the film industry as well as a key feature to the movie going experience. The following image is an example of cartoon trailer.



Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) trailer

The first, and by far most memorable full-length animated feature from the Disney Studios, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" made history when it was first released in December, 1937 and since then has become an incomparable screen classic.

It is difficult to assess precisely what effects cartoons and cartoon trailers might hold. Still, the images in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) trailer tug the viewer's attention even when the film is seen once and in isolation.

Theoretically, the purpose of the movie trailers in general and cartoon trailers in particular is to tease the audiences into wanting to see the film by creating suspense and not revealing the main plot. Therefore, in two and a half minutes, a trailer has to convey enough information about the movie to convince the audiences. It stands to reason that they will become curious as to know what would happen in the end. It will then push them to go to the cinema once the film is released to watch the full movie. As a matter of fact, one minute of video is worth 1.8 million words and a good trailer is itself a mini-story designed to sell the much bigger story of a movie.

Over the year, trailers have been seen as worthy of study. I hold opinion that analyzing popular trailers will help us understand the linguistic features of verbal and visual resources used in each trailer.

For the above reasons, I chose to do research on the topic "A study of cartoon trailers in English from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis." Through the working of modalities in cartoon trailers, the study is an attempt to contribute to film appreciation by raising awareness on how the animated movie works internally and serves to enhance our experience and enjoyment of films. It may also help us better understand the film we watch and how they are related to society and cultural in general.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims

The primary aim of the study is to understand the linguistic features of verbal and visual resources of cartoon trailers as well as find out how they work together to convey the meaning of the story to the viewer.

1.2.2. Objectives

The aim is formulated as a set of objectives, as follows:

- to analyze the elements in a cartoon trailer.
- to find out how their meaning are construed to attract viewers.
- to suggest some implications on advertising as well as on teaching and learning English of Vietnamese learners.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are the elements of cartoon trailers structured?
2. How are meanings expressed through visual and verbal resources in cartoon trailers?

1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As the study of multimodal discourse is interdisciplinary that involves a variety of linguistics, semiotics, media studies, etc., it requires researchers to make a deep study on how the meanings are made in a multimodal way. Modalities in cartoon trailers involve the use of dynamic co-occurring moving images, written and verbal linguistic text and music. However, due to the limitation of time and

knowledge, the researcher did not target at all aspects of cartoon trailers such as grammatical features, phonetics features, pragmatic features and music analysis as well. In this thesis, the researcher proposed a model for the multimodal discourse analysis of cartoon trailers in terms of verbal and visual resources. In particular, the researcher analyzed the elements constructing the meaning of image and classified the process type of all the utterances, then reached to the final conclusion. Three cartoon trailers were analyzed for a case study with the aim to explore how the semantic features and visual images within a trailer interacted with each other in the process of meaning creation.

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Through this thesis, the researcher attempts to dedicate more to the development of the multimodal discourse analysis by taking cartoon trailers as database. Applying an integrated multimodal approach to analyze a trailer enhances our understanding of how a trailer works through the different modalities to realize meanings in the final product and how the overall meaning can provoke response in the audience viewing the film. It is hoped that the findings of the research can not only contribute to enrich the theory of multimodal discourse analysis but also benefit the trailer film producers and help them make good use of choice-making of modalities as well as the arrangement of visual elements to accomplish perfect visual design. Finally, this study would help teachers, learners and advertisers to have a better understanding of cartoon trailer.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I present a brief review of some previous researches on multimodal discourse analysis and the discourse analysis of cartoon trailer, then explicate the theoretical foundations of this research as well as some definition of terms. This chapter is arranged as follows: 2.1 Definitions of terms; 2.2 Literature Review; 2.3 Theoretical Background.

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars and researchers both in Vietnam and abroad have done researches on multimodal discourse from different aspects.

O' Halloran (2005) pays attention to a more nuanced definition of the term multimodality and distinguishes the term from multi-semiotic.

Ye (2006) made an attempt to interpret multimodality of hypertext on the basic of people's website.

Nguyen Thi Hong Ha (2011) made an investigation into structure of movie trailers and linguistic features of advertising language of American and Vietnamese movie trailers in terms of their grammatical features.

Zhao (2016) made a multimodal discourse analysis of movie posters. Two movie posters are analyzed from the three meta-functions, namely the representational meaning, the interactive meaning and the compositional meaning.

Pham Thi Thanh Nga (2016) showed the discourse features in American cartoon trailer in term of the layout of narration of trailers and some other lexical choices, syntactic features as well as cohesive devices.

Dai (2017) discussed the relationship between language, image, motion, posture, sound and other modalities. He made a multimodal discourse analysis of the movie *Argo* clip (3 minutes 30 seconds) from the perspective of context of culture, context of situation and image meaning.

However, these researchers have not mentioned other issues of trailers such as music, sound, images, etc.; but only discourse structure and linguistic features of movie trailers and cartoon trailers. That is the reason why I chose to do a research on “A study of cartoon trailers in English from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis”.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Concepts of “Multimodality”

The term ‘Multimodality’ first appeared in “Handbook of Visual Analysis” by van Leeuwen and Jewitt in 2000. This term is introduced to highlight the significance of taking all semiotic resources into consideration, such as language, color, image and sound. As complex social and cultural discourse practices are gaining popularity in the semiotic landscape, language is losing its position as the dominant meaning making method.

Concept of “Cartoon”

Cartoon in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 8th is defined as a film/movie made by photographing a series of gradually changing drawings or models, so that they look as if they are moving. In this thesis, cartoon is viewed as a film or movie for cinema, television or computer screen. It is made by playing a series of gradually changing drawings or models in a quick succession, so that they look as if they are moving.

Concept of “Trailer”

Katz (1980, p.1145) regards a trailer as “... a short publicity film, shown as part of a regular program at a theater, advertising the merits of a forthcoming motion picture...the trailer consists of highlight scenes appropriately cut to create an impression of excitement...”. He claims that trailers or previews of coming attractions are both praised and reviled by film scholars and moviegoers. Kernan (2004) also confirms that trailers are not only a form of advertising but also a unique form of narrative film exhibition, wherein promotional discourse and narrative pleasure are conjoined. She argues that in trailers, images are selected and combined in ways that privilege attracting the spectator’s attention over sustaining narrative coherence. Following the concepts mentioned above, I consider that a trailer is a short publicity film, shown as part of a regular program at a theater, advertising the merits of a forthcoming motion picture to attract the audiences’ attention. A trailer usually

consists of two main parts which are images and narration. Trailers often circulate online on websites for the film and the studio, in trailer archives, on YouTube, and on media-centered “magazine” websites.

2.2.2. Labov (1967)’s model of narrative structure

Labov (1967) introduces a model of narrative analysis that differs from some of the earlier approaches. In his model, Labov focuses on oral narrative instead of written text whereas other linguists in the earlier time believed in a structural approach. Labov introduces and explains what he sees as the six main parts of a narrative structure. The six main parts of Labov’s model include abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. However, it is not necessary to have all six parts presented in every narrative, for example, some narratives will not have an abstract, while others may not have a coda. Additionally, these components need not appear in a specific order, and each may be present in a variety of ways.

2.2.3. Halliday (1985)’s Transitivity System

According to Halliday (1985), there are 3 main functions of language which can be used to explain the structure of language. They are ideational, interpersonal and textual. The three meta-functions can be summarized as follows:

- The ideational function is to organize the speaker’s or writer’s experience of the real or imaginary world.

- The interpersonal function is to indicate, establish or maintain social relationship. It consists of forms of address, speech function, modality and so on.
- The textual function is to create written or spoken texts which coheres within themselves and fit the particular situation.

In this thesis, the researcher only focused on exploring the ideational meaning in visual and verbal modes constructed from the cartoon trailers.

According to the theory, there are three components of what Halliday calls a “transitivity process”: the process itself, the participants in the process and circumstances. Then, Halliday (1985) divides into six processes, namely: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential.

2.2.4. The Grammar of Visual Design of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996)

Multimodal discourse analysis thriving in the 90s of the last century helps to solve the problem to most degree, for which Systemic Functional Grammar founded by Halliday (1973) is well suited to provide theoretical tools. Derived from Systemic-Functional Grammar, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) propose a systemic and comprehensive framework for visual analysis in “Reading Images”. Then, polynomial discourse analysis began to develop from the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) called "Reading Images: The

Grammar of Visual Design". With this work, Kress and van Leeuwen build the foundation for visual learning signals, which provides the theoretical framework and methods to analyze image signals. It is clear that the polynomial discourse analysis of Kress and van Leeuwen is built on the framework of the theoretical framework of Systematic Linguistics of M.A.K. Halliday.

Based on Halliday's theory, Kress and van Leeuwen use different terms for the same subjects: representational instead of ideational; interactive instead of interpersonal; and compositional instead of textual in detail. The representational meaning deals with the way which images represent the relations between represented participants in the picture. It is divided into narrative representation and conceptual representation.

Kress and van Leeuwen's (1990, 1996, 2006) framework of visual analysis is metafunctional. The meaning of visual communication can be considered in terms of Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual metafunctions. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual representation categories are able to be directly applied to both visual and verbal semiotics. They are preferred in this study as the aim is to describe intersemiosis or interaction between the two semiotics. The experiential categories which are used here for image analysis are derived directly from the Systemic Functional Language lexicogrammatical system of transitivity. They are processes and participants in those processes.

In this thesis, the researcher followed the Narrative Structure of

Labov (1967) to identify the narrative structure of trailers, the verbal resources were analyzed according to the theory of Transitivity of Halliday (1985) and visual meanings were explored under the theory of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996).

2.2.5. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

O' Halloran (2011) describes 'semiotic resource' as the resources such as language, image, music, gesture and architecture, 'sensory modalities' as visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory and kinesthetic in multimodal texts, discourses and events, collectively called 'multimodal phenomena'.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis is concerned with theory and analysis of semiotic resources and the semantic expansions occurring as semiotic choices combine in multimodal phenomena. MDA also pays attention to the design, production and distribution of multimodal resources in social setting, for example, van Leeuwen (2008).

This thesis adopted MDA as analytical framework which was described in detail in chapter three.

Chapter Three RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis was conducted based on qualitative, quantitative and descriptive methods and focused on narrative structure according to the theory of Labov (1967), transitivity analysis of ideational meaning of Halliday (1985) instead of representational meaning of Kress and van Leeuwen and Grammar of Visual Design of Kress and

van Leeuwen (1996).

- The qualitative method was applied as a useful tool to highlight the semantic features of spoken language and image meaning used in trailers.

- The quantitative method was used to calculate the frequency of occurrence and ratio of linguistic elements in cartoon trailers.

- The descriptive method was applied to make interpretation of what the researcher saw, heard and understood through the visual resources in each shot.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.2.1 Sources

To conduct this thesis, the researcher downloaded cartoon trailers from two sources of data:

- The first source is the official websites of three American cartoon film companies as they are among the most successful ones in the area of animated film industry.
 1. Walt Disney Animation Studio – www.disneymovieslist.com
 2. Pixar Animation Studios – www.pixar.com/
 3. Warner Bros. Animation – www.warnerbros.com
- The second source is the website www.youtube.com.

3.2.2 Sampling

This paper makes a multimodal discourse analysis of some selected shots in three cartoon trailers namely “Finding Nemo”, “Up” and “Small foot” from the perspective of visual meaning and process type of utterances in narrative structure. They are utterances in the three trailers (verbal resources) and all the elements that make sense such as color, gestures, facial expressions, time, place, appearances of characters (visual resources). As cartoon trailers are structured form quick cuts, they mainly focus on the images than spoken language, therefore, more visual resources were collected than verbal resources.

Through those selected shots in each trailer, the researcher collected 158 resources in total.

Table 3.1. Total resources in three trailers

Trailers	Resources		Total
	<i>Verbal resources</i>	<i>Visual resources</i>	
Trailer 1	17	29	46
Trailer 2	22	43	65
Trailer 3	10	37	47

3.2.3. Data Collection Procedure

The research was conducted in a series of steps.

- Firstly, I watched the whole trailer at least 5 times to get an overview of that trailer.
- Secondly, I classified it into shots and watched each shot again. I

paused at every scene to collect visual resources by writing down the elements in each image such as characters, color, appearances...

- Next, I listened carefully to the utterances of each character and then transcribed into written form in sentences for further analyzing. These scripts were regarded as verbal resources for analyzing.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

- First, I adopted the theory of MDA, Labov (1967)'s narrative structure, Halliday (1985)'s Transitivity System and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996)'s Grammar of Visual Design to carry out qualitative and quantitative descriptions of these resources. Specifically,

+ Applied Labov (1967)'s Narrative Structure, each trailer was considered whether it had a full narrative structure or not or how many parts there were in each trailer.

+ The verbal resources were analyzed into processes under the theory of Halliday (1985)'s Transitivity System.

+ The visual resources including images and sound were analyzed in detail of every color, position, salience as well as gestures and behaviors. Each selected shot must have three parts in sequence participants, process types and circumstances, basing on the theory of Grammar of Visual Design of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) as mentioned in chapter 2.

- Second, the processes of verbal and visual resources were counted in terms of frequency and calculated by ratio to reach the final discussion.

- Last, after being analyzed in detail of narrative structure, process of utterance and visual meaning, each trailer was generalized

in the discussion. The researcher reached the conclusion about the structure of each trailer, the genre of the trailer, the purpose of each shot and the main plot of each trailer as well as the conclusion of how the structure meaning in the image supports the utterances to create final meaning.

3.4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK BASED ON MDA ADOPTED

Table 3.2. Analytical framework based on MDA adopted

ANALYSIS RESOURCES IN SELECTED SHOTS (Verbal and visual resources)			
LABOV (1967)'s NARRATIVE STRUCTURE	KRESS AND VAN LEEUWEN (1996)'S GRAMMAR OF VISUAL DESIGN		HALLIDAY (1985)'S TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM
	Verbal resources	Visual Resources	
1. Abstract	-utterances	-Position	1. Relational process 2. Mental process 3. Existential process 4. Behavioral process 5. Verbal process
2. Orientation		-Body shape	
3. Complication Action		-Color of clothes	
4. Resolution		-Facial	
5. Coda		expression:	
6. Evaluation		+ eyes +eyebrows	

		+mouth +glint -Actions	6. Material process
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Chapter Four

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. ANALYSIS OF TRAILER “FINDING NEMO”

4.1.1. Introduction of “Finding nemo” trailer

4.1.2. Analysis of trailer “Finding Nemo”

4.1.3. Discussion

Table 4.3. The summary of process types in trailer 1.

Types of process	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Material process	11	24 %
Mental process	6	13 %
Behavioral process	7	15 %
Relational process	17	37 %
Existential process	2	4 %
Verbal process	3	7 %

Total	46	100 %
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As stated by this figure, this trailer tended to use relational process more than other process types (37%). Hence, this trailer belonged to “presenting”. It mainly focused on introducing the characters including friends and enemies of the two fishes. In fact, a well-built trailer must have a flow of motion through it, they were sound and music creating the feeling that everything was playing together and would push viewers through the film's experience. The trailer built interest and anticipation, and rhythm played a very important role in increasing that feeling. The structure of the trailer was the interruption and sudden jerk from self-happy changes to anxiety and inner thoughts.

The findings collected in this thesis by analyzing verbal and visual resources in each selected shots were totally different from other researches as they had expressed the meaning conveyed through non-verbal modalities (image and sound) as well as the processes expressed in these modalities. This helped to reach to the conclusion about the genre of the trailer as well as the way to attract viewers through its narrative structure.

4.2. ANALYSIS OF TRAILER “Up”

4.2.1. Introduction of “Up” trailer

4.2.2 Analysis of trailer “Up”

4.2.3 Discussion

Table 4.4. The summary of process types in trailer 2

Types of process	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Material process	22	34 %
Mental process	10	15 %
Behavioral process	13	20 %
Relational process	18	28 %
Existential process	0	0 %
Verbal process	2	3 %
Total	65	100 %

Based on the summary of process, it could be concluded that this trailer belonged to action genre as the dominant process was material process (34 %). The key term of material process is doing or happening. This trailer mainly focused on revealing what happen in their journey such as the appearance of Russell (shot 3), the storm (shot 4) as well as introducing other characters like the dog (shot 5), the bird (shot 6), the anti-hero (shot 7).

It is necessary to mention the findings of analyzing eight selected shots in trailer “Up”. These finding proved that MDA had been adopted effectively to find out the combination between verbal and visual resources in creating meaning whereas other researches had not mentioned.

4.3. ANALYSIS OF TRAILER “Small foot”

4.3.1. Introduction of “Small foot” trailer

4.3.2 Analysis of trailer “Small foot”

4.3.3 Discussion

Table 4.9. The summary of process types in trailer 3

Types of process	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Material process	6	13 %
Mental process	5	11 %
Behavioral process	11	22 %
Relational process	20	43 %
Existential process	1	2%
Verbal process	4	9%
Total	47	100%

The result clearly showed that relational process was the dominant process which accounted 43%. It was followed by behavioral process, 22%. Through the 8 selected shots, there were only 10 utterances that expressed 10 processes whereas other resources (images and sound) conveyed 37 processes in total. Accordingly, the researcher could reach a conclusion that this trailer mainly introduced

the characters and their behaviors. It was about an adventure but paid more attention to emotional elements than dramatic or violent scenes.

In this thesis, the genre of trailer could be identified basing on the findings of the analysis of verbal and visual resources instead of analyzing all of the linguistics features. That was the different between this thesis and the former researches.

4.4. SUMMARY

Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has reported on a multimodal discourse analysis of three cartoon trailers. The data collected from selected shots were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively basing on analytical framework of MDA adopted. The meaning created by the visual and verbal resources as well as the meaning arising from the combination of these elements was considered in the analysis of all three cartoon trailers to answer two research questions.

In terms of research question 1: How are the elements of cartoon trailers structured?

The result showed that all of the three trailers had elements in selected shots with different number in each trailer. Moreover, all of the three trailers had the same narrative structure consisting of Orientation – Complication Action – Resolution. They did not have a full narrative structure according to Labov's Theory. Nevertheless, those parts successfully implemented the main purpose of a trailer that

was introducing the main characters as well as revealing most of the events that happening in each story.

In terms of research question 2: How are meanings expressed through visual and verbal resources in cartoon trailers?

Table 5.2. The summary of process types in detail of three trailers

Trailers	Resources	Process types						Total
		Material process	Mental process	Behavioral process	Verbal process	Relational process	Existential process	
Trailer 1	Verbal resources	5	4	1	1	6		17
	Visual resources	6	3	6	2	10	2	29
Trailer 2	Verbal resources	11	5	1	2	3		22
	Visual resources	11	5	12		15		43
Trailer 3	Verbal resources			2	2	6		10
	Visual resources	6	5	9	2	14	1	37

In general, multimodal discourse analysis was applied successfully in realizing the role of verbal as well as visual resources in three trailers. They worked together to represent the final meaning in each trailer. It can be concluded that the most frequent type of process in each trailer revealed the genre of it.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS

This thesis is conducted with the hope that its findings would contribute some useful knowledge about cartoon trailers not only in the field of advertising but also in teaching and learning English of Vietnamese learners.

In theoretical terms, this research will be of necessity for those who are interested in the multimodal discourse analysis method in general as well those who intend to do further research into the

multimodal discourse of cartoon trailer or movie trailers in particular.

Take in illustration on copywriters; images and languages used in cartoon trailers are considered as a powerful means to create a good impression on audiences, to appeal to their interest and persuade them to see the film as soon as it is officially shown. Nevertheless, it is not easy to create effective lay out to achieve advertising purpose so I hope that the results of the study would supply useful information to better their work. For example, it indicates parts and patterns that are often included to form good layouts of a cartoon trailer, points out the most common syntactic features and lexical choices that make spoken language in cartoon trailers gain expected effect. By understanding how it works in reality, copywriters as well as advertisers may be better able to enhance their effectiveness in advertising situation.

In pedagogical term, this research will probably be a practical reference resource for teaching English. Cartoon trailers are huge source of that natural input which is always available and very easy to obtain. The results of this research can provide English teachers with useful knowledge in the field of multimodal discourse analysis which can be used in their classes in the following suggested ways. For instance, in speaking classes, the teacher let students watch an American cartoon trailer in a limited time and student have to invent conversation either dialogue or monologue of a particular situation of each scene in that cartoon trailer. After that, teachers show the dialogue or monologue in the movie, the conversation certainly surprise students because they are the most outstanding and attractive ones extracted from the real cartoon. Another example may be the use of cartoon trailers in listening classes. It is clear that the images can

support comprehension of conversation between characters. Cartoon trailers can also be used effectively in writing classes in which students are asked to write a part or the whole story or resolution part. In these way, students can acquire the knowledge of discourse features and develop their speaking, listening and writing skills easily and naturally. Especially to those who intend to participate in the task of writing film trailers, it provides them a linguistic background, methods and strategies to write attractive narrations in cartoon trailers.

5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to provide a multimodal discourse analysis in the three cartoon trailers to understand the content and meaning of the film. The scope of the study is the dialogue, context, actors, colors, lighting ... that take place in the film. The research cannot avoid restrictions because the selection of the scene may not fully reflect the content and meaning of the movie or may not fully analyze all the factors in the context of the conversation.

This research is simply the first step in the study of multimodality due to the limited personal academic capacity. I can comprehend that the exclusion of some worthwhile aspects concerning this topic is inevitable within a research paper of fewer than 100 pages. Hence, there are some points left for further investigation.

- First of all, I only choose three cartoon trailers for a qualitative study and the conclusion draw only on three samples that may restrict the generality of the research findings.

-Second, this research only mentions the verbal structure and the interaction between the verbal and moving visual images in cartoon

trailers.

All in all, I own a hope that this study would be a valuable reference for anyone who takes an interest in the topic of multimodal discourse analysis.

5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES

Based on the limitation of the research, further study can be conducted in the following aspects:

- More cartoon trailers should be collected and analyzed for a more comprehensive qualitative study.

- Researcher can make an analysis on the inter-semiotic relation between visual and verbal mode of cartoon trailers or movie trailer.

- A more comprehensive study of how the scene is staged in cartoon trailers or movie trailers, by integrating the use of camera techniques into Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) visual grammar.