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Show or tell. The language of emotions in Spanish and Italian ADs



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An overview



The character's inner
condition in the
narrative storyworld



Introduction to the
analysis: corpus and
methods



A framework for the
analysis of the
language of AD



The contrastive
analysis: results



Conclusions and
further research

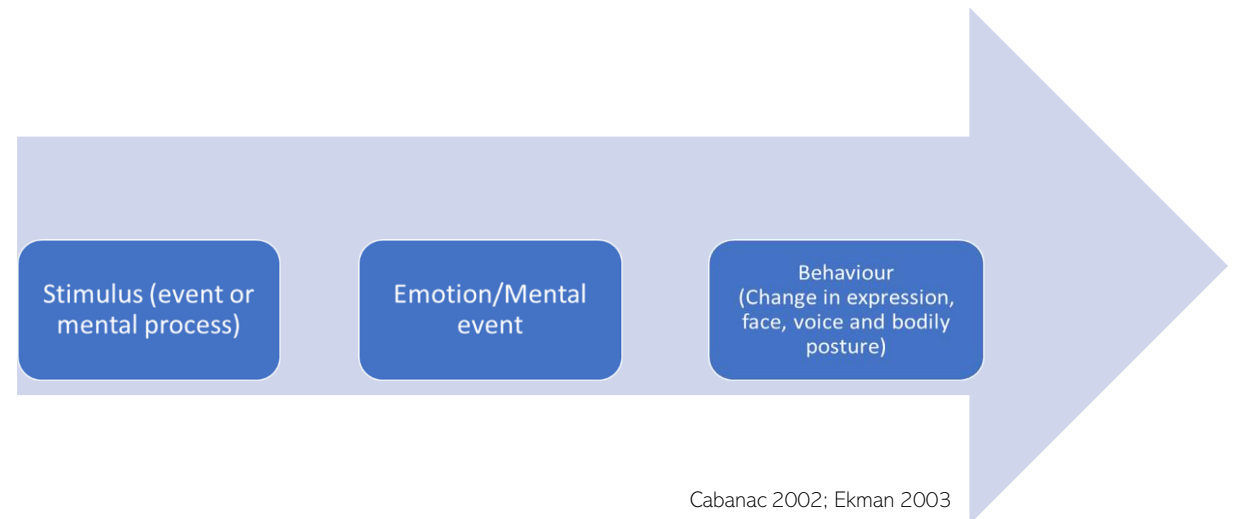


At the *heart* of filmic narration



Adapted from Bandirali and Terrone 2009

- **Psyche**: the inner world, the complex of *sensory*, *emotional* and *mental* activities that take place in the characters' minds and determine the development of the story.
- *Psyche* is the engine of **intentions and goals**, the dimension from which the values justifying the **actions** proceed, as well as the field where **memory** and recollection thrive (Bandirali and Terrone 2009).



Cabanac 2002; Ekman 2003



A contrastive analysis of Spanish and Italian ADs.

METHODOLOGY

What is left unexpressed?

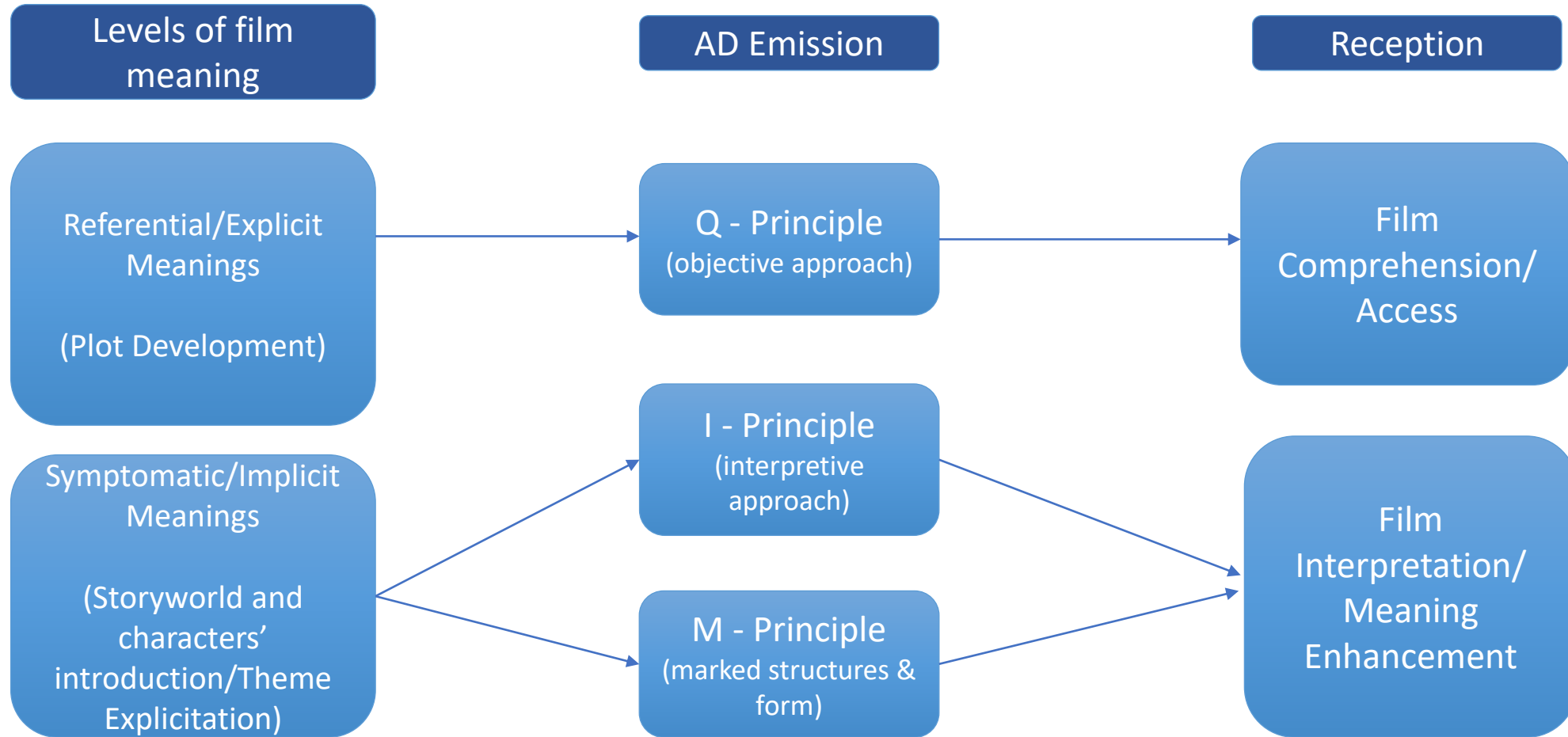
- The visual, non-verbal signs which interact **co-textually** with other signs and channels in a broader, multimodal **context** (Zabalbeascoa 2008). Focus on the **expression of emotions** and of the characters' inner state in several contexts of situation.
- Adoption of Ekman's taxonomy of universals in facial expressions of emotion (1972). Identification of the **somatic patterns** related to the *six basic emotions* (surprise, fear, anger, disgust, sadness, happiness).

How can meaning be enhanced?

- Analysis of **verbs, nouns, adjectives** and **adverbs** adopted in the Spanish and Italian AD scripts to verbalize the character's emotional condition.
- Classification of the linguistic resources according to their **lexico-semantic features** and the relationship established with the image.
- Assessment of their **compliance with the communicative function** associated with the scene.



Analytic framework for the language of AD. A proposal





Descriptive and qualitative analysis of the Spanish and Italian ADs related to the characters' expression of emotions.

Research carried out on a total amount of 53 film fragments taken from the following drama films:

- ❖ *Murder on the Orient Express* (Branagh, 2017)
- ❖ *The Post* (Spielberg, 2017)
- ❖ *Wonder* (Chbosky, 2017)
- ❖ *The King's Speech* (Hooper, 2010)
- ❖ *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, 2008)
- ❖ *Todo sobre mi madre* (Almodóvar, 1999)



The contrastive analysis

VERBS

Spanish AD

Italian AD

Q - PRINCIPLE

- Verbs of *movement* and *action* («coge el arma», *takes* the weapon; «baja la cabeza con los ojos llorosos», *lowers* her head with tears in her eyes)
- Many units refer to the *character's gaze* («contempla», *contemplates*; «observan cabizbajos», they *observe* dejected; «le mira sorprendido e indignado», astonishingly and angrily *looks* at him)

Q - PRINCIPLE

- Verbs of *movement* and *action* («cammina avanti e indietro», *walks* back and forth; «si abbracciano stringendosi forte», they *hug*, tightly *holding* each other)
- Verbs indicating the *character's gaze* («guarda turbata McNamara», she *looks* at McNamara, agitated; «fissa il microfono come un avversario da temere», *stares* at the microphone like a rival to be afraid of)

I - PRINCIPLE

- *Predicates (verbs plus adjectives)* indicating the character's inner condition in scenes that introduce the characters and in those that move the story forward («está solo y pensativo», he *is* alone and *pensive*; «queda pensativa», she *is* pensive)
- *Verbs with specific connotations* that put the characters' behaviour into words, especially in scenes that introduce the characters and their narrative storyworld («accede y guarda el cigarrillo», he *acquiesces* and puts the cigarette away; «ella fuerza una sonrisa», she *forces* a smile)

I - PRINCIPLE

- *Predicates (verbs plus adjectives)* that provide information on the character's reaction («resta impassibile», *is* indifferent; «è attonito», he *is* shocked)
- *Figurative use of verbs* to conjure up the character's inner condition in highly tense moments («sciogliersi in lacrime», *melt* in tears; «si perde nei ricordi», *gets* lost in memories). No significant association with the communicative function of the scene
- Infrequent employment of *verbs overtly alluding to the character's emotional state*, when the detected emotion seems unambiguous («Auggie gioisce», Auggie *rejoices*; «soffre», *suffers*; «non può sopportare il peso di tanta morte», cannot *bear the burden* of so many deaths)



The contrastive analysis

NOUNS

Spanish AD

Italian AD

Q - PRINCIPLE

- Predominance of *proper names* and nouns referring to the characters or their *role* («el rey», the *King*; «la mujer», the *woman*) and *kinship* («mira expectante a su madre», anxiously looks at her *mother*)
- Mention of *body parts*, usually the face and character's gaze associated with information inferable from the image («ojos llenos de lágrimas», *eyes* full of tears; «le palmea un hombro [...] y pone las manos sobre las de él», he pats his *shoulder* [...] and puts *hands* over his)

Q - PRINCIPLE

- Predominance of *proper names* and nouns referring to the characters or their *role* («il sovrano», the *King*) and *kinship* («padre e figlio», *father* and *son*)
- Reference to *body parts*, sometimes embedded in interpretive verbalizations of the image («si stringono le mani con commosso affetto»; they hold each other's *hands* with moving affection)

I - PRINCIPLE

- Only in the AD of one film, nouns pertaining to the field of *cognition* («empieza a perder la esperanza», begins to give up *hope*), *emotion* («explode de rabia», bursts into *rage*; «esboza una gran sonrisa de esperanza y de felicidad», shows a huge smile of hope and *happiness*) and *sensation* («transmite odio con su mirada», instills *hate* with his gaze; «sus sonrisas delatan su amor», their smile reveal their *love*)

I - PRINCIPLE

- Use of nouns referring to *cognition* («si perde nei ricordi», gets lost in *memories*; «tormentati pensieri», anguished *thoughts*), *emotion* («riversa sulla vittima la rabbia della moglie», unleashes his wife's *rage* on the victim) and *sensation* («commosso affetto», moving *affection*; «disagio», *discomfort*; «trattengono la commozione», contain their *emotion*; «risentimento», *resentment*; «odio», *hate*; «pena», *sorrow*). Detection of these items even in scenes aimed at moving the story forward
- Use of *abstract nouns* to describe the *situational context* («ambiente carico di ufficialità»; room imbued with *formality*)



The contrastive analysis

ADJECTIVES

Spanish AD

Italian AD

I - PRINCIPLE

- Adjectives that make the *character's reaction* explicit («*embelesado*», *entranced*; «*furioso*», *furious*; «*angustiado*», *anxious*; «*sorprendido*», *surprised*; «*triste*», *sad*; «*abochornado*», *embarrassed*; «*pensativa*», *pensive*; «*atónito*», *stunned*; «*expectante*», *nervous*), prevalently in scenes aimed at introducing the character, either alone or in combination with the need to move the story forward
- Moderate use of *evaluative adjectives* to describe the context or the individuals' attitudes («*ser exagerado*», *theatrical person*; «*se aproximan lentamente con las emociones contenidas*», they slowly approach each other with *restrained* emotions; «*abochornados por la poca entereza de su sucesor*», embarrassed for his heir's lack of integrity)

I - PRINCIPLE

- Predominance of *evaluative descriptions* («*volto etereo*», *ethereal face*; «*l'ombra funesta*», *mournful shadow*; «*tormentati pensieri*», *tormented thoughts*; «*suntuosa sala*», *luxurious room*; «*sguardi audaci, atteggiamenti fieri*», *audacious gazes, austere attitudes*; «*sorriso insincero*», *insincere smile*; «*ricordo vivido*», *vivid memory*; «*pena grandissima*», *great sorrow*; «*sorriso nostalgico, [...] disperato, [...] beffardo*», *nostalgic, desperate, jeering smile*; «*commosso affetto, moving affection*»)
- Adjectives that refer to the *character's mood* («*delusi*», *disappointed*; «*attonito*», *astonished*; «*seccato*», *annoyed*; «*impassibile*», *unperturbed*; «*spaesato*», *confused*; «*avvilito*», *disheartened*; «*smarrito*», *confused*; «*scosso*», *upset*; «*impaurita*», *fearful*; «*turbata*», *agitated*)

Q - PRINCIPLE

- Items referring to *physical features* («*Ojos llenos de lágrimas*», eyes *full* of tears; «*ojos abiertos, inmóvil*», eyes wide *open, unmoving*; «*la boca pintada*», *painted* lips) and *conditions inferable from the image* («*se queda solo*», remains *alone*; «*mira a su padre muerto*», looks at his *dead* father)

Q - PRINCIPLE

- Adjectives indicating *physical features* («*occhi lucidi e smarriti*», *glistening* and *dismayed* eyes; «*lineamenti affilati*», *thin* features; «*occhi intensi cristallini*», intense, *crystalline* eyes) and *conditions inferable from the image* («*la ragazza, sola*», the girl, *alone*; «*rimane solo*», remains *alone*)



The contrastive analysis

ADVERBS

Spanish AD

Italian AD

Q - PRINCIPLE

- Predominance of *adverbs of manner* that modify verbs and nouns, specifying the nature of the character's actions or attitude («*en solitario*, recorre la antesala», goes through the entrance hall *alone*; «*esperan en silencio*», *silently* wait; «*se le acerca lentamente*», *slowly* approaches; «*le mira fijamente*», *intently* stares at him)

Q - PRINCIPLE

- Use of *adverbs* and adverbial phrases *of time and place* embedded in clauses concerning the character's emotional state («*nel presente*, la ragazza sola in quella stessa spiaggia», *now* the girl, alone on that same beach)

I - PRINCIPLE

- In some cases, the *adverbial phrases of manner* qualify the characters' actions, providing a rather interpretive verbalization of the image («*le mira con arrogancia*», *arrogantly* looks at him; «*se incorpora bruscamente*», sits up *abruptly*; «*mirándole con dureza*», *severely* looking at him; «*la estrecha con ternura*», she hugs her *tenderly*)

I - PRINCIPLE

- Predominance of *adverbs of manner* through which the actions and attitude of the character is made explicit («*con fare regale*», *with a regal attitude*; «*appaiono con insistenza*», *insistently* appear before him; «*la guarda attentamente*», *cautiously* looks at her; «*la indica con fierezza*», *proudly* points at her; «*guarda con rancore*», looks at her *with resentment*)



Conclusions and further research

- Results show the preference of the examined Spanish and Italian ADs for the objectivity principle. *Verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs* used to verbalize the characters' expression of emotions are usually *faithful to the visuals*. In some circumstances, nevertheless, interpretive approaches seem to gain ground.
- *No significant correlation* has been found between the **communicative function** of the scene and the **lexical units** employed in the compared AD scripts.
- Overall, the *Spanish AD* seems to opt for *objective descriptions of the characters' nonverbal behaviour and reactions*. The only exception is the use of *adjectives and adverbial phrases* that modify verbs and nouns, making room for more evocative renderings.
- The *Italian AD* appears more prone to subjectivity, as demonstrated by the use of *abstract nouns, evaluative adjectives and figurative uses of the parts of speech* selected for the description.
The nonexistence of relation between the communicative aim of the scene and the linguistic strategies adopted entails that the reason underlying the detected tendencies is to be considered in the light of stylistic preferences.
- Guaranteeing access to the visuals is of outmost importance when selecting the linguistic strategies to adopt in AD. Yet, in order to raise users' interest and improve their experience of *following and enjoying* the story, the relevance of *vividly describing* the characters' attitude and actions, as well as the verbalization of the atmosphere that dominates the narrative should be considered.
- The results need to be confirmed through further research and **quantitative methods**. Furthermore, the validity of the model needs to be tested on other narrative components of the storyworld. **Reception research** is pivotal to assess the users' opinions towards the strenghts and weaknesses of adapting the description to the communicative function that prevails in each film scene.





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Thank you for your attention!



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