



## A Multimodal Analysis of Babies' Products in Selected Ads

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### Abstract

This paper aims at analysing some of the babies' products to show an aspect of harmony between text and image in which each company employs its text and image to sell its product. Thus, multimodality is used to show how text and image are used together as a mixture to make the ad more acceptable. Therefore, this paper is set against the multiple uses of images accompanied with different texts provided by specialists to provide something aesthetic as well as useful to the reader. Therefore, the field of ads in regard to babies' products is about illustrating the overall context of multimodal advertisement of each product for the purpose of clarifying the benefits of each product. Thus, the significance of this paper is to summarize the functions and characteristics of multimodality focusing on the use of linguistic devices that will be systematically researched, analysed, and summarized via taking into consideration the unity of text and image. Methodology of this study follows Barthes (1977) cited in Machin (2007) model of analysis to analyse each linguistic device and image in a specific text.

**Keywords:** Multimodal, analysis, ads, children, products,

### 1. Introduction

As a linguistic concept, multimodality started in 1996 after the establishment of Kress and Van Leeuwen a multimodal analysis framework for social semiotics and the grammar of visual design for the purpose of how images convey meanings. So, employing these symbols or images within the text help the audience understand the information conveyed by the advertisement via decoding these images which will have a variety of effects on the reader. Thus, dealing with multimodality can make certain contributions to the field of ads. Kress and Leeuwen (1996) suggest that the key notion in any semiotics is the sign or sign-making and how these forms are used to realize meanings. They add that images are too polysemous and open to a variety of possible meanings. Barthes (1977, p.9) mentions that semiology aims to take in any system of signs whatever their substance and limits like images, gestures, musical sounds and objects. Gee (2010, p. 36) asserts that in multimodal discourse analysis the textual threads are many and they are materially diverse: gesture, speech, image, writing, music. These can be drawn into one textual/semiotic whole. Hyland and Paltridge (2011, p. 120) mention that multimodal discourse analysis is an emerging field in the study of discourse which develops the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images and scientific symbolism, gesture, music, action and sound. Thus, in multimodal texts, discourses and events are called multimodal phenomena. Therefore, Multimodal studies rapidly developed in mid-2000s onwards a systemic linguist when other language researchers became fully aware of exploring the integration of language with other resources. So, as a domain of enquiry multimodal studies encourage engagement

and fertilization with other disciplines which have the same object of study. Barthes (1977) cited in Machine (2006, p. 21) states that each language has its specific icons (letters and



words) that represent sounds, things and concepts and the meanings of these icons are considered arbitrary and have become established in cultures over time. Another important thing that Barthes mentions is that the “hidden meanings” of visual signs in which kinds of people, places, and settings can each connote whole sequences of activity, values and models of social organization (ibid: 23). Thus, the two important elements in semiotic approach are denotation and connotation.

Denotation is used to be considered as a method to take meaning into consideration as the first level of meaning in a photograph. Connotation on the other hand, is used to connote ideas or concepts. So, asking what an image connotes is asking what ideas and values are communicated through what is represented and through the way in which it is represented. Thus, this level of meaning is concerned with the cultural associations of elements in the image because these associations connote particular discourses, kinds of people and kinds of problems and solutions. In such a way, Barthes (1977) distinguishes between denotation and connotation stating that denotation is the first level of meaning or the literal meaning while connotation is the second layer of meaning or the hidden meaning. Concerning connotation, there four elements that should be taken into consideration like: poses, objects, settings and photogenia (photographic style). Poses have theirs potential meaning that they often connote in regard to the association with the subject they refer to. For example, a soldier at attention stands straight, rigid and tense. This has metaphorical meaning of disciplines, subjection to the confines and restraint of authority. The second element is “objects” which are studied due to the way in which they combine with other meanings. Thus, objects are analysed due to their ability to transport meanings via taking into consideration the presence of certain objects and their connotive powers associated with a particular context. Settings are mainly concerned with the details of the image and what the image is intended to symbolize rather than document. Photogenia refers to the style of the art work or the techniques of photography, e. g. framing, distance, lighting and focus.

## **2. Aims of the Study**

This study aims at analysing images and texts as a multimodal approach of analysis in the field of advertisement in some babies’ products. It focuses on analysing texts and images provided by a specific company illustrating the four elements of connotation stated by Barthes (1977) cited in Machine (2007, p. 27). The study is concerned with the four elements of connotation following Barthes (1977) model of analysis. Thus, the above-mentioned elements are the main concern of this study taking into consideration the dimension of each element employed in each analysed text.

## **3. Literature review**

This paper is entirely concerned with illustrating the main notions used to analyse images and texts in the field of advertisement. It also focuses on viewing the four elements of connotation in detail to discuss their uses in selected children ads. The paper also focuses on the relation between text and image since the major aim is to shed light on multimodality (text and image) and how the use of multimodality has its effect and usefulness in the field of ads.

### **3.1 Text & image**

Barthes (1977) cited in Machine (2007, p. 25) shows his main idea about text as a linguistic unit, which is employed to differentiate a specific piece of information that is intended to

signify the image. Thus, the figure does not symbolize the words because the words are employed to be added to the figure or image. Efficiency of connotation, on the other hand, is considered as something significant which is entirely diverse on how the text is written suggesting that some of these figures are employed exclusively to convey appropriate occasions like “things, places or even people”. So, these figures or images are applied to report the real world.

### 3.2 Denotation & Connotation

Kreidler (1998, p. 43) uses the term denotation to refer to the potential of a word like “door or dog” to enter into language expression while connotation is directly concerned with the effective or emotional associations it elicits. Thus, denotation identifies the central aspect of word meaning that everybody agrees about. Connotation, on the other hand, refers to the personal aspect of meaning, the emotional associations that the word arouses. Cruse (2006, p. 33) mentions that connotation is mainly used to assign the aspect of non-truth conditional view of meaning as the suggestive features or register allegiance. He suggests that denotation as a linguistic expression is applied to represent the aspect of meaning used to make accurate description of the world (Ibid). Leech (1990, p. 9) summarizes that denotative or cognitive meaning is frequently adopted as a central feature in communication and it is reported as the crucial functioning of language. Thus, denotation is taken into consideration as the value of a communicated expression by what it indicates. Crystal (1997: p. 109) states that denotation or denotative meaning is used to indicate the relationship between a linguistic unit and the non-linguistic entities to which it refers. Connotation on the other hand is used to specify to the intimate correlations which are proposed by a linguistic unit (Ibid: 82).

### 4. Methodology

This study is designed to provide a textual analysis to examine a collection of data selected exclusively from advertisements that include images to analyse them according to the four elements of connotation. Suggested by Barthes (1977) cited in Machine (2007, p. 27). Thus, the main concern of the study is to investigate carries of connotation in order to organize the applying of multimodality as a mode of a language need in the field of advertisement. Thus, analysing these images as a multimodal approach is the most considerable part of the study to recognize their connotative or non-literal.

### 5. Analysis of selected data

This part is about analysing five figures of different baby ads regarding numerous products that employ text and image in their ads. Thus, each product has a specific form to reveal its product by applying a special way of using language as well as image and how these are in the field of ads. Through the analysis, the researcher will take into consideration the words selected concerning every product to be studied in accordance with the four elements carries of connotation of these products taking into consideration their percentage of usefulness and effectiveness. Every product in this paper is considered to be analysed via adopting multiple words and images that can show multimodality of the product.

### Figure1



By looking at this figure, we will reader that this advertisement is about babies' lotion showing both the baby and the lotion images with bright colours as well as the company's text written at the top of the picture with more than one word to assure that quality of the product. At the bottom of the photo or pose, there is another text starting with a number like (100) and percentage that are employed to intend a hidden meaning with a baby's image where he puts his hand fingers on his face and a woman's hands grapping the baby. The picture shows the baby laying on his back and almost naked displaying his full body after using the lotion. This connotatively used to convey the intention behind the usefulness of this product to the skin by applying words as "scientifically" as an adverb, and verbs like "soothe" "nourish" and "protect" Another thing is that the baby is looking at the product while he is laying on his back to be face to face with product since it is a kind of the baby's comfort after using this product. As an object of the image, there are two objects: the first one is the product and second one is the baby and both of them are presented clearly to show the systematic organization between them. The setting of this image shows that the image is displayed clearly taking into consideration the text and the pictures included to view the product for those who are interested in such kinds of products.

All the above-mentioned words are frequently employed with positive intention to connote the successfulness or usefulness of this product. So, using these words brings the people's thought that a product like this has its effects on babies' skin in a way that the customer will be excited to buy it. So, other words like "to achieve nice skin" could be used but the previous ones are more preferable to make people familiar with it. Thus, by using words like the mentioned above and a well-organized image, that contains the benefits of the product, mothers could think of getting the product since they feel sure that such a product has its benefit on babies' or children's skins within a limited period of time. The photogenia of this product is shown clearly when we look at the style of the image which is designed to display two texts and two pictures. The first text is written with large font containing words that are





all capitalized like “SOUTHES, NURSHES & PRODUCTS WITH NATURAL AROMA”. These words, according the image design, have the priority in this ad rather than those written at the bottom of the ad containing the message “100% SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN HERBAL ACTIVS”. If any one looks at this ad, he/she will find the both texts are written with capital letters and have the same colour indicating that both texts are important to the customer with a little bit difference between them. The first text is written to deliver the benefits of the products which are considered the significant part of the ad besides the second text which is added to tell customers that this product is completely safe since it is proven scientifically and the ingredients of the product are herbal. Thus, these two texts will make mothers feel safe towards buying such a product. The product also contains two photos: the child and the product itself. The two photos are designed to be displayed separately without any interference to make them clearly shown or seen by the customers. Thus, the customer can look at the product and read the benefits and then look at the child who is shown after using the product. The product photo is printed so clearly with all its details like “green cure, “body lotion” and the ingredients around the tube with much chosen brightly colours like yellow, green and brown and there is a systematic combination between the colours of texts and the product tube.

Figure 2

**Wellness**  
*From head to toes*

**Emergency**  
pharmacy

Himalaya SINCE 1930  
gentle baby shampoo  
nourishing baby gel  
Baby Powder  
baby lotion  
gentle baby bath  
baby cream

Prices from  
**\$4.00**  
USD

OPEN  
7AM  
TO 10PM

+263 713 843 388

Landlines: +263 292 264248 | +263 292 883507/9 | +263 292 269781  
Shop 1 iMbali Mall, Robert Mugabe Way, Btwn 8th & 9th Ave, Bulawayo.

By looking at this advertisement, the customer will notice that it is about “Himalaya” company products. These products include: Shampoo, baby oil, baby lotion, baby powder baby bath and baby cream. The picture also contains the company’s flagship words like “wellness” which is written in bold red and “from head to toy” and “emergency pharmacy”.

The intended meaning of the image is expressed via the above-mentioned texts that are intended to be applied by the company to those who are interested in babies' products.

The ad starts with the word "wellness" which is written in red bold to fascinate those who seek healthy lotions. It is adopted here to mean that there is no side effects on babies' skin which is very of assistance to try this product confidently supported by the phrase "from head to toe" that is also used to connotatively mean "everything you need is only this". Another well-chosen phrase is "emergency pharmacy" which is used to connote that these products are very useful and safe for babies comparing with pharmacy. Thus, the word pharmacy is used to connote how important these products are and since they are important it is advised be bought for children. This image shows the pose of the child as he is laying on the milk with a smiley face. The smiley face connotes the baby's comfort because of using this product and the milk below the baby represents the ingredients of the product. This image also has two objects: the baby the six tubes of the products that show the main core of this ad. The photos inside the image are displayed precisely with an arrangement of the product types in front of the child. The image has three texts printed obviously to be seen or read by customers. The first text includes "wellness, from head to toe". The second one includes "Emergency pharmacy" and the third one includes various information concerning the product like: "the prices from & 4.00 USD", "OPEN 7AM to 11 PM", "phone number" and "the store location". Looking at this ad carefully, it will be noticed that the first text "wellness, from head toe" and the second one "Emergency pharmacy" are printed in a bold red font larger than the third one which includes information about the price, phone number and store location.

It seems that the image style is designed to give the priority to the first and the second texts since they have the necessary information of the product in which the customer needs "wellness, "from head to toe", and "Emergency pharmacy". All these words are carefully chosen to make the product acceptable since the word wellness means health and this assures that this product is proved to be healthy and "from head to toe" means that the customer will need nothing else rather this product to satisfy all babies' needs. The phrase "Emergency pharmacy" means that this product is like a pharmacy in need for babies. All the above-mentioned information is used and designed by the company to make this ad acceptable by presenting all the facts about the product in the image which contains both texts and images. The company's message behind dealing with multimodality is to reach to the full satisfaction of the product covered by a well-designed ad.

Figure 3



This advertisement is about “children’s milk” under the name of “Enfagrow”. If the customer focuses on this advertisement, he/she will notice the following: “#1brand in the world”, “nourish your child’s mind and heart”, two kids standing face to face with a smile and the product can with all information. So, this advertisement is designed to include texts and images to show all the details of this product. The advertisement connotes a suitable product with two kids facing each other. The word “#1brand in the world ” is applied to reveal something perfect that is generally remarkable. It is employed collectively with another text like “nourish your child’s mind and heart” to mean something fully healthy which is very impressive for mothers who care to have their babies’ healthy. It seems that the company uses words like "brand 1", “nourish”, “mind” and “heart” to make mothers conscious of how important to get this milk which includes all these things. The picture of the kids holding “A” together is also considered something significant to affect the customers’ attention since mind is a very crucial factor concerning the child. Thus, the company seems to focus on getting mothers’ attention about the product’s achievements to help them be confident concerning the results of this type of milk. The words used in this advertisement is to recognize a effective results of this milk in order to emphasize how important this product is. The pose of the kids is professionally designed to be shown with the two kids facing each other with smiley faces as a result of drinking this type of milk. The image of the product can itself is also effective since it is printed carefully and clearly to include all the information needed about the milk. The text “brand 1 in the world” makes the product welcomed by customers especially when it is accompanied with a text like “nourish your child’s mind and heart” since nourishing the child’s mind and heart is the mothers’ priority to guarantee healthy kids without any expected diseases. Therefore, the image is well organized to be studied according to a multimodal research design when texts and images are combined together to produce this ad.

Figure 4

**Giving your baby the best is caring about every little thing.**

Your baby is delicate and precious, making you want to give her the utmost care.

**When it comes to your baby, no detail is too little for you.**

From clipping her tiny nails in the gentlest way, to carefully holding her neck as you pick her up for an embrace, you care about every detail. Because nothing is too little when it comes to your little one.

We at Johnson's understand this. That's why every baby product that we create is inspired by your care and backed by science. For us, it's the details that matter just like you.

**INGREDIENTS Safe FOR USE**

Each of our products passes a strict 5 level safety process, ensuring every ingredient is safe for use. And only after each product is clinically proven to be mild for your baby, does it reach you and a million other mothers around the world.

It's about leaving no stone unturned, just the way you don't. And doing anything and everything, no matter how little it is, to make sure your baby gets only the best.

**5 LEVEL SAFETY PROCESS**

**Every product we create is inspired by your care and backed by science.**

**CLINICALLY PROVEN**

**Johnson's**  
always does best for baby

To learn about our Best for Baby care - Ask Johnson's: Call - 1800 22 8112 | [Facebook](#) /johnsonsbabyindia | [Instagram](#) /bestforbaby



For this advertisement, Johnson company used four texts and two images to show the message of the product in this the ad. The first text starts with the first text which includes “giving your baby the best is caring about every little thing”. The second text is like the directions of use but the things in focus are “5 level safety process”, “ingredients safe for use”, and “clinically proven”. The third text includes “Johnson always does best for baby” and the fourth one is Johnson’s call number. The first text is printed with a light blue colour including two important words for the baby: “best” and “care” to show the vitality of this product. The second text has three messages that are printed in light red font which are: “5 level safety process”, “ingredients safe for use”, and “clinically proven”. These are used to deliver a very significant message about the product since they contain information like how safety and clinical this product is and these messages are like an answer of the customer’s question. Therefore, Johnson’s prefers to prioritize the product benefits rather than anything else as we saw in above when the company in its second text prefers to make the customer sure whether the product is safety and clinically proven. Another thing is that Johnson’s prefers to put its name or logo at the bottom of the product leaving the middle space for the above-mentioned information taking into consideration the significance of this step in its ad. Concerning the images, the company used two images: “a women grapping a baby laying on his back”, and “Johnson products”. This ad denotes a delighted woman who smiles at her baby while it connotes the quality of the brand via using a word such as “best” which is an adjective that is adopted to show that this production line will add something unnoticed by mothers, assuring that it is very specific since because a word like “best” frequently has its impact others. The words “best” and “caring about every little thing” are collected with the word “giving” to mean that the child will be comfortable by using this Johnson’s products. This kind of combing texts and images is very interesting to deliver the message to the audience. The woman in the photo is perfectly chosen as is usual with a charming smile to represent a promise for mothers who seek health for their babies. in this product. It is a way of showing that mothers are recommended to have product from Johnson. Other necessary elements in this ad are the figures of the products themselves which are arranged in a series besides the baby’s picture. The goal of this appearance is to make this product to remarkable where the word Johnsons is written accompanying the products. The design of the ad is proposed to entail the main idea which is introduced via the woman’s photo, the child and the products which contain every information that is in need for this product.

**Figure 5**







This advertisement is dedicated to impress those who are interested in babies products care. “GENTLE” company uses two texts like: “Choose Gentle” and “we are committed to creating the gentlest baby product because your little one deserves it”. The company employs only one image in this ad that contains “a smiley woman hugging her smiley baby”. The first text “chose gentle” is employed by the company at the top of this ad to deliver the message of the company that how useful this product is to be chosen by customers. The second text includes words like “gentlest” and “deserve” and both of them are used to convey the idea that how useful this product is besides our babies deserve it. Thus, this image is deliberately employed as a way of convincing mothers to protect their babies. Another thing is that this ad, as a photogenia, is sketched to contain a mother’s image with her child focusing on them only rather than anything else to make them appear clearly for customers who are interested in this ad and the intended meaning is to promote the audience to get it. The ad literally means a middle-aged woman holding her baby while it is intended to convey how valuable this product is by applying certain pose illustrated by the healthy baby with the phrase “gentlest baby” printed on the advertisement background. The phrase “gentlest baby” is used for its specific promotion to have its effect on readers of this ad. It is like something strongly expressed to reveal the usefulness of the product. Thus, using these kinds of objects, settings, poses and photogenia will have its influence on those who care about babies’ health because it is combined very well with the written texts to have a multimodal approach design.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper studies five figures of baby products that are analyzed to shed light on babies’ products of different companies a multimodal analysis framework. The analysis of five figures shows that there is more than one element of connotation that are used in images. Another concern is about today’s ad in which the term multimodality is primarily studied as a frequent linguistic device to make the audience impressive towards a specific product and indicate the products quality. Therefore, this study is directed to clarify the use of multimodality as a framework in advertisements.

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