A Social Semiotic Analysis of International Inflight Magazines as a Tourism Discourse: A Cross-cultural Study

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Abstract

Despite being an important category of multimodal tourism discourse, Inflight magazines and their roles in promoting international airlines' profile and their host country, are mostly under-researched. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the application of different visual and semiotic strategies regarding social actors' race, age and social class and how people are represented in different international airlines' inflight magazines. For this purpose, 16 international airlines' inflight magazine issues were selected depending on the host country's geographical location and availability. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006 [1996]) and van Leeuwen's (2008) visual grammar, the data were analyzed based on ideational, interpersonal and compositional levels. The results revealed that inflight magazine designers, content developers and advertisement agencies tend to apply certain visual and semiotic resources. They reinforce bias and false stereotypes towards certain groups of people in terms of their age, race and social class originating in political, historical and ideological perceptions and standpoints of higher institutions across the world. The findings also highlight the importance of visual literacy being promoted to the target audience, including air travelers and EFL learners.

Keywords: Social Actors, In-flight Magazines, Social Semiotic Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Tourism Discourse, Visual Grammar

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Due to the technological advancements introducing new platforms for nonlinguistic and multimodal communication and expressions for meaning-making (Nelson and Kern, 2012), the language learning/teaching agenda is experiencing important changes characterizing the "post method" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) as well as post-linguistic era. According to Kress (2003, p.35), "language alone cannot give us access to the meaning of the multimodally constituted message". And as he further explains, we should look at meaning-making practices from a "satellite view" in which language, like Earth in space, is seen as "only one small part of a much bigger whole" (Kress, 2010, p.15). In other words, "Language is moving from its former, unchallenged role as the medium of communication, to a role as only one medium of communication" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, [2006], p.34).

According to Bell and Davison 2013, we have a chance to achieve the objective of creating a good first impression on readers which is through producing appropriate visual content. Furthermore, the last few decades have witnessed a major shift away from the dominance of verbal content to visual images (Kress, 2010). As noted by Prodromou 1988, the focus, even in media studies and EFL materials, tended to be more on visual representation rather than textual content. Consequently, visual representations are being consistently employed in almost all EFL/ESL materials and media for illustration and information purposes (Baldry, 2000; Kern, 2006; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; Lim Fei, 2007; O'Halloran, 2009, 2011; O'Halloran, Podlasov, Chua & K.L.E, 2012; Pauwels, 2012; Tahririan & Sadri, 2013). It should be borne in mind that discourse in general and visual images, in particular, are never neutral and innocent. As Fairclough (1989, p.52) claims, "not all photographs are equal: any photograph gives one image of a scene or person from among the many possible images. The choice is important because different images convey different meanings".

Images, consciously or unconsciously, are a significant player in affecting and changing the viewers' attitudes, gender or race stereotypes, values and behaviors of a given community (Lester, 2000). In other words, visual representations can manipulate people's ideas, attitudes and stereotypical patterns (Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Berger, 1972; Bishop & Jaworski, 2003; Caldas-Coulthard, 2003; Lester, 2000; Sheldon, 2004; Van Leeuwen, 2008). According to Jewitt and Oyama (2001), the semiotic resources, such as different degrees of interaction, detachment and involvement, are not the exact hidden meanings in the text to be revealed; instead, they just mean potentials waited to be activated by the viewers and producers of the image. Despite the importance of visual

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literacy in the modern world (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), it is rarely taught in schools and educational systems.

Review of Related Literature

A large number of studies have explored the meanings behind words and images in various mediums of communication and discourse, including advertisements (Najafian & Ketabi 2011), EFL/ESL learning materials (Salbego et al. 2015, Ansary & Babaii 2003, Machin and Van Leeuwen, 2009; Sahragard & Davatgarzadeh, 2012; Baleghizadeh, & Motahed, 2012) and inflight magazines (Small et al. 2008, Maci 2012, Conradie 2013).

Najafian and Ketabi (2011), in their study, have attempted to investigate the application of Fairclough's (2003) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach and Social Semiotic Approach (SSA) proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in analyzing the discourse used in advertisements.

In an attempt to uncover the hidden meanings, stereotypical and biased portrayals and depictions of various groups of people in multimodal educational texts, many researchers have drawn upon multimodal critical discourse analysis and conducted a visual analysis to investigate <u>linguistic or nonlinguistic</u> semiotic resources (Adami, 2013; Ansary & Babaii, 2003; Babaii & Ansary, 2001; Baldry, 2000, 2004; Baldy & Thibault, 2006; Guijarro & Sanz, 2008; Hartman & Judd, 1978; Iedema, 2003; Knox 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006 [1996]; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2009; Thibault, 2000; Thompson, 2002; Young, 2009; Babaii Atai & Kafshgarsouteh., 2016).

Salbego, Heberle, and Soares da Silva Balen (2015) have investigated the extent to which visual mode in multimodal texts can enhance students' understanding by applying Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar. The result of their study revealed that the existence of visual resources could scaffold and enhance the chance of students' comprehension, especially at the beginner level, and it also helps them understand verbal and textual discourse more effectively.

Attempting to investigate gender bias in English learning textbooks, Ansary and Babaii (2003) conducted a multimodal discourse analysis of two ESL textbooks (Right Path to English I and II) and concluded that a very limited and restricted range of occupations are attributed to women such as student and nurse, while a more diversified range of jobs and professional occupations were attributed to men such as teacher, policeman, doctor, soldier, farmer and dentist.

Machin and Van Leeuwen (2009) also conducted a critical multimodal analysis of children's war toys over the past 100 years in order to provide a detailed multimodal

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analysis of contemporary war toys. They concluded that manufacturing and sending war toys to children worldwide are in complete harmony with American industry, global economic ambitions and the American military forces, especially after the end of World War II.

Turning back to inflight magazines, Small, Harris & Wilson (2008) also analyzed advertisements within this kind of magazine through a critical discourse analysis to explore the social sorting of air travelers. The findings of their study demonstrated that magazine advertisements are usually designed for an 'elite' minority of people who have sufficient time and wealth to travel to luxurious global destinations.

In order to investigate how inflight magazines recreate themselves as global products, Maci (2012) examined 10 American and European inflight magazines through semiotic and discursive analysis. The findings suggested that the global layout, format, pictures and content of inflight magazines make readers perceive them as a global and international product and the airline industry, like other international corporations, tends to apply marketing strategies in order to promote and differentiate "national interests in an international context" via their inflight magazines (p.213).

Conradie (2013) also conducted a critical discourse analysis of race and gender in advertisements in the South African Domestic in-flight magazine "Indwe". The results indicated that regardless of gender or group type of the represented participants, there is a clear tendency for the 20 – 40 age range to show within the advertisements. Similar to Small et al. (2008), images contain white people more than other non-whites, including Asian and Colored-groups. In other words, white people are still the dominant race; however, this trend is less marked in Conradie's (2013) study, and it reveals the advertisers' assumption of the demographics of this elite minority.

Statement of the Problem

As inflight magazines are considered an important aspect of the tourism industry, Jaworski and Pritchard (2005) believe that discourse, communication and tourism have been developed theoretically and critically in their own right, but how these three important phenomena interact with each other has received little attention. Although in recent years, there are a few studies that have focused on this particular genre from different standpoints (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2003; Small, Harris & Wilson, 2008; Maci, 2012; Conradie, 2013, Martikainen & Adriani, 2022), little is known about how they attempt to represent people, places and cultures through the application of different visual resources. Hence, a social semiotic analysis is needed to explore the meaning potentials

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and semiotic resources in this particular media genre and then compare the Iranian inflight magazines with their foreign counterparts in order to help the designers improve the level of effectiveness in the depiction of various social factors and create their desired feelings and impacts on the viewers. The present study attempts to investigate to what extent inflight magazines reinforce race, age and social class as well as cultural and regional stereotypes and how this kind of media attempts to represent and depict people.

To further clarify the points under investigation, the following research questions are formulated from a social semiotic standpoint:
1. How do international inflight magazines depict people in terms of their race?
2. How do international inflight magazines depict people in terms of their age?
3. How do international inflight magazines depict people in terms of their social class?

Theoretical Framework

Different approaches have been used to analyze the meaning of visual images, including formalism, contextualism, and social semiotics, combining them by focusing on the meaning of the message being transmitted. In simple words, Semiotics is the study of signs and their meaning-making resources. In fact, interpreting signs will bring "behind the scene" elements to the foreground (Jeffers, 2000).

According to Jewitt and Oyama (2001), Social semiotics, as a branch of the field of semiotics provides practical tools for researchers in order to analyze and study visual texts in a systematic way. In other words, social semiotics is not an end in itself, but a means for critical research. According to Van Leeuwen (2005), it opens our eyes and other senses to a wide variety of different semiotic resources both at the level of production and interpretation. In his article, he also states that all meanings are very much like what Halliday has referred to as "meaning potential", in which none of the words and sentences have a determined and fixed meaning, but their meanings can differ in different social contexts.

Social semiotics follows the tradition of Halliday (1978) in recognizing three major kinds of semiotic meanings, which are functioned and performed simultaneously. According to Halliday (1978), these three metafunctions are called ideational, with the function of creating representations in the world, interpersonal metafunction, with the function of creating and establishing a relationship between the writer and the reader; the textual metafunction to bring together the representations and interactions into a meaningful whole. Recognition of these three major functions in language has largely influenced Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic framework of visual communication

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grammar (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001). Further, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) have extended Halliday's metafunctions to visual images and other modes of communication by applying different terminologies. 'Representational', 'interactive' and 'compositional' meanings were the new terminologies adopted by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) instead of 'ideational', 'interpersonal' and 'textual' metafunctions, respectively.

Table 2.

Interactive visual meanings (interpersonal) adapted from Kress and Van Leeuwen's The Grammar of Visual Design (1996)

Interactive meanings (interpersonal)	Contact	Image act	Offer demand
		gaze	Direct (degrees of engagement) Indirect (degrees of disengagement)
	Social distance	Size of frame	Close (Intimate/Personal) Medium (Social) Long (Impersonal)
	Attitude	Subjective image	Horizontal angle (involvement & detachment) Vertical angle (Power and equality)
		Objective image	Action orientation (frontal angle) Knowledge orientation (top-down angle)
	Modality	color	Color saturation Color differentiation Color modulation
		contextualization	Absence of background Full detail
		representation	Maximum abstraction Maximum representation
		depth	Absence of depth Maximally deep perspective
		illumination	Full representation of light and shade Absence of light and shade
		brightness	Maximum brightness Black and white or shades of light grey and dark grey
		Coding orientation	Technological Sensory Abstract naturalistic

According to van Leeuwen (2008), among all the factors and visual resources discussed, gaze, distance and angle are the most important semiotic resources to decide who is depicted as 'others'. He mentions three important strategies used for making

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represented participants as others and strangers to the interactive participants. These three strategies are as follows:

1. Disempowerment, representing participants as below us and subservient.
2. Distanciation, showing social actors are not close and intimate to us through medium and long shot distances.
3. Objectivation, which depicts social actors as objects of viewers' scrutiny rather than as subjects addressing the viewers with their gaze (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 141).

And in terms of the third metafunction, compositional meaning, according to Kress & Van Leeuwen, (2006) [1996], which relates representational and interpersonal meanings, is realized through the use of three interrelated semiotic resources of information value, salience and framing. Based on this kind of meaning, different locations of visual images have different informational values: the right is the area of the new ideas, the left is the location of the already-known information, the top zone indicates the ideal figures, and the bottom area is the place of the real information while the center is the place of the main ideas and the margin is the zone of dependent parts. Salience refers to size and color contrasts, and placement. Finally, the framing strategy can connect or disconnect the represented participants by concrete frame lines, white space between elements, and dividing lines produced by means of other devices.

Visual Grammar

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]) attempted to offer a method to interpret visual images based on their context and formal aspects. Through the grammar of visual design, it is possible for the researchers to compare and contrast the grammar of verbal and visual forms of communication. As callow (1999) states, when readers or students look at an image and shape some initial thoughts and reactions, the process of critical reading begins in that image.

Kress and Van Leeuwen consider text and image as two independent modes of communication. Based on their visual grammar, the meaning of an image is just related to a given text, not dependent on it (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Royce, 2007).

According to Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) [1996], in order to examine interactive or interpersonal meanings of images, there are certain semiotic resources of contact (demand or offer), social distance (intimate, social, or impersonal), and attitude (subjectivity versus objectivity including involvement, detachment, viewer power, equality and representation of power.

Method

The corpus of the present study including 16 issues of the international airlines' inflight magazines of Garuda Indonesia and Air Asia (East Asia), Alitalia and My Austria (Europe), Qatar Airways and Oman Air (Arab countries) and Iran Air and Mahan Air (Iran). Two issues from each airline, have been selected from the year 2016 to 2018. The selection of inflight magazines is based on their geographical region, the airline's reliability and also the researcher's access to the magazines either through their office or official websites. Therefore the sampling strategy is a mixture of two kinds of samplings: Convenience and purposive criterion-based.

In the present study, Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006 [1996]) and Van Leeuwen's (2008) visual grammar and social semiotic models are drawn upon to investigate how people of different ages, races and social classes are visually represented and depicted in these international inflight magazines. In this sense, this study is an exploratory interpretive and qualitative research that investigates how people from different ages, races and social classes are visually represented and depicted in four sets of international inflight magazines.

In order to establish an inter-coder agreement in this study, 10 percent of the corpus was analyzed by a graduate applied linguist who received brief training in visual analysis based on the Kress and Van Leeuwen's model, phi coefficient was applied to data (phi = 0.83) that shows an acceptable level of inter-coder agreement.

Regarding the procedure, Images fall into two categories concerning the presence and absence of gaze: demand–represented participants look directly at their viewers - and offer- participants do not look directly at their viewers. The frame's size ranges from extremely close shots to very long shots, which are usually applied to indicate various degrees of social distance between the interactive and represented participants. Moreover, the attitude, which is represented via perspectives and angles, is divided into two main categories of objective images and subjective images through a horizontal angle as an indicator of involvement or detachment of the social actors and the viewers and a vertical angle as an indicator of power differences among the participants.

In terms of social actors, there are three categories of race; black (African), white (European) and colored (Asian) people, and three categories of age; children (up to 12), adults and the elderly (above 65) and four groups of social class; upper class, middle class, working class, and lower class, based on their visually depicted or verbally mentioned occupations.

Using a social semiotic analysis at the ideational level, the researchers have investigated the interactions and relations between the represented participants (people and things) depicted in images through two main narrative and conceptual processes. At the interpersonal level, the interactions between social actors and interactive participants have been investigated through gaze, angle, distance and modality (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Van Leeuwen, 2008). Furthermore, there have been numerous applications of the other three strategies to make the represented participants as 'others' and 'not belonging to our world': distanciation, disempowerment, and objectivation. Information value, framing and salience were also taken into account at the compositional levels of study.

Results and Discussion

RQ #1: How do international inflight magazines depict people in terms of their race?
Race
Garuda Indonesia Airline: The Colours inflight magazine (October 2016- 2017 issues)

Based on the definition of race provided by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009), which falls into three groups of white (European), Black (African) and Colored (Asian/ middle eastern), Garuda Indonesia inflight magazines have attempted to include almost all different races, and it can be said that nearly no race has been excluded from these inflight magazines. Although it was expected From Garuda Indonesia airline, which is located and originated in Indonesia, a south Asian country, to see other races, including Africans (black) and Europeans (white), as strangers through strategies of objectivation, distanciation, and disempowerment (Van Leeuwen, 2008), surprisingly there was no trace of using the above-mentioned strategies for depicting other races as others.

Image 1.1   image 1.2.

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There were only two exceptions: an African man, Image 1.3, where the portrayal of the black man is the offering mood. This strategy which is called 'objectivation,' makes the represented participants the object of the viewer's scrutiny, not a person to invite the viewer to be involved in the image due to lack of gaze to the eyes of the interactive participants.

Another exception is a picture of an Indian woman, image 1.4, who is displayed as a stranger and others in our modern world through the strategy of objectivation and distanciation. She has no individuality since her face cannot be seen from behind and she is shown as a generic Indian. In fact, when social actors are represented as generic kinds of people, they are symbolically excluded from being depicted in visual images.

Image 1.3   Image 1.4

It should also be mentioned that there is no trace of Arabs or Middle Eastern people and also Latin Americans in this airline's inflight magazine despite the fact that a large number of middle Eastern people live and work in Indonesia and travel daily to different destinations in the world via different international flights.

There is an interesting point in the local Indonesian people's representation through these magazine images, which indicates a tendency to show local and tribal people as others in inflight magazines' international and globalized context. For example, image 1.5, showing a young Indonesian boy wearing traditional and tribal costumes, is taken from a high vertical angle in a medium shot which indicates varying degrees of distanciation and disempowerment. However, it is a demand picture in which the only represented participant is looking directly at the camera (demand mood). Another example is photo 1.6, in which a local Indonesian man is collecting the harvest from a low vertical angle with no gaze or direct eye contact, and his face is not clearly shown to

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the viewers. Therefore he is depicted as others and strangers to international air travelers through the strategy of objectivation.

Image 1.5   Image 1.6

There is a meaning potential that local Indonesian people are depicted as objects of viewers' scrutiny, not as independent individuals who have a voice and are willing to make interactions with the viewers. It also might mean that local people have no voice or specific character and nothing to say and share in an international context. But the modernized and westernized version of Indonesian (East Asian) people are depicted as normal, accepted and nearly highly appreciated in the international context.

Image 1.7

Air Asia: 3sixty inflight magazine (November 2017 – January 2016)

Air Asia's inflight magazine designers have attempted to include almost all three categories of races but in a much-differentiated way. In other words, many visual discourses and pictures have represented Far East Asian people (colored race) due to the geographical location of the host country (Malaysia).

In most cases, south Asian social actors are trying to contact the viewers through their gaze (demand mood). It seems that the represented participants in demand pictures

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are trying to send a special message to their interactive participants. For example, in photo 1.8, two young south Asian people are directly looking toward the camera and, through their gaze, are trying to establish a relationship with the audience. At the same time, image 1.9 also shows an Asian man whose gaze, smile, body posture and hand vector are trying to make contact with international viewers. He is shown from a medium close shot as an indication of far personal distance from the viewers. As can be seen, none of the East Asian people are represented as others when they are in western-like contexts, but as long as they are in their own local contexts, they are represented as strangers. For instance, image 1.10 showing a group of Far East Asian women with traditional dresses and rituals, have no voice and no individuality based on the strategy of objectivation since they are depicted generically as Malaysians or Far East Asians in an offer mood.
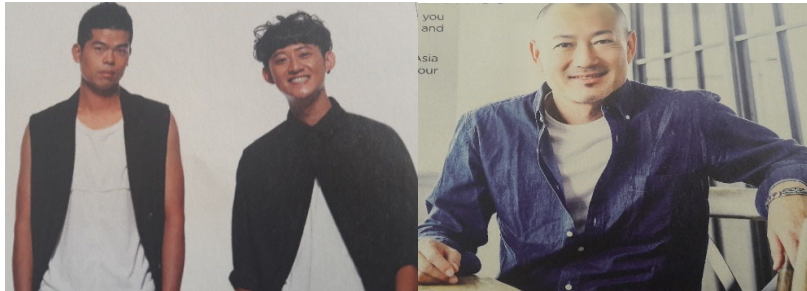

Image 1.8   *image 1.9*

Nevertheless, other races, including black and white people, are also represented as others and strangers in this magazine (image 1.11), meaning that they do not belong to the Malaysian world through different strategies of objectivation and distanciation.

Image1.10   *Image 1.11*

Qatar Airways: The Oryx inflight magazine (October 2016 – July 2017)

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Although Qatar Airways inflight magazine designers have attempted to include almost all three categories of race, there are vast meaningful differences in their visual depictions. Nearly no race has been excluded from Oryx inflight magazines.

As Qatar is an Arab country located in the south of the Persian Gulf, the designers have tried to represent the Qatari people, culture and their special outfits through Arab men pictures right at the beginning of the Oryx inflight magazine.

As seen from visual images, the men are looking directly at the camera (demand mood) and trying to speak with the international viewers. The first photo is taken from a close-up shot which indicates a close personal distance between the represented and interactive participants (Image 1.11). This could mean that Qatari people, unlike previous perceptions against Arabs, are likely to interact with international companies and people worldwide. The second picture (image 1.12) shows the CEO of Qatar airways inflight magazines, which is shown in the position of power in a medium shot (low vertical angle and direct contact). These pictures are the only representations of Middle Eastern people as one of the most important groups of the colored race.

Image 1.11   *Image 1.12*

Most of the pictures in Oryx inflight magazine represent European people as the majority of people depictions and the optimal race among international viewers. They are mostly up-to-date, fashionable, handsome and living a luxury lifestyle. White people are the dominant and majority group among different races and ethnicities in this inflight magazine. They are treated as symbols of modern and luxurious life which is the main theme of international airlines, especially Qatar airways.

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Image 1.13   *Image 1.14*

The Oryx inflight magazine has only depicted black and African people in three cases: local, indigenized and poor people living in the desert or jungles and not having welfare facilities necessary for modern life. Tribal and black people are represented as strangers through the strategies of disempowerment, objectivation and distanciation to show that they do not belong to a globalized world. Another factor is the low levels of modality and saturation, which contributes to the depiction of black people as 'others' and strangers.

Image 1.15   *Image 1.16*

Regarding Indians, there are two cases in which they are shown as objects of the viewers' scrutiny and not belonging to us as international viewers. They are depicted as others in their own context through the strategy of disempowerment and objectivation, and the air travelers should only look at their local schools, traditional costumes and their rudimentary lifestyle because they do not belong to the world of foreign passengers and viewers. This can be understood through the offering mood and high vertical angle in the visual content.

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Image 1.17   *Image 1.18*

Oman Air: Wings of Oman inflight magazine (September 2016 – July 2017)

Wings of Oman magazine designers have excluded black people in almost all of the cases, while European and colored (Far East Asian, Indian, Arabs and middle eastern) people are frequently depicted in most of the cases. For example, the only case in which black people are represented in this magazine (image 1.19) is a tribal African people from a distant and back view, indicating their detachment from the modern world. The extreme long shot also depicts them as a culturally generic group of nomads with a far social distance from air travelers. As a consequence, they are symbolically excluded from being depicted in the visual content of Oman Air inflight magazine.

Image 1.19

A note to mention is that there are a few visual images representing human social actors in this inflight magazine, and most of the depictions are about tourist destinations. The only social actors are white men having direct contact (demand mood) with the viewers in an eye-level vertical angle of the camera with a happy smile (image 1.20).

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Image 1.20

Skylines: My Austria inflight magazine (June 2016 - May 2017)

My Austria's inflight magazine designers have mostly excluded black (African) and colored (Asian) people but attempted to include white people frequently in various contexts. It seems that colored and black races are considered strangers in this inflight magazine through objectivation, distanciation or disempowerment strategies.

Through oblique view and offer mood in photos, the colored races are depicted as 'others' and not belonging to our world (image 1.21, 1.22). In other words, the viewer has no involvement with the represented participants, and they are offered as objects of viewers' scrutiny and strangers to them.
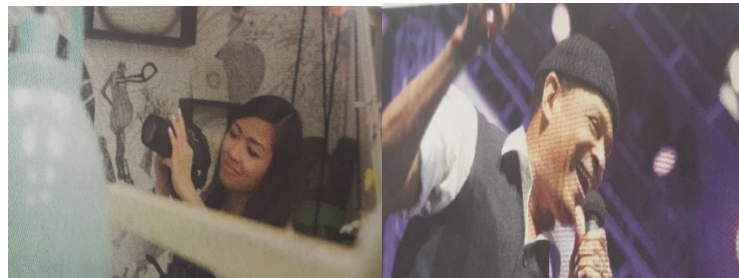

Image 1.21   *Image 1.22*

Alitalia Airline: Ulisse inflight magazine (October 2016- October 2017)

Ulisse inflight magazine designers have attempted to include almost all three types of races. Although it was expected to see other races as "others" through objectivation, distanciation and disempowerment strategies in a European Airline, almost all cases are directly looking to the camera (demand mood). But through a careful investigation, it can be understood that the white/European social actor's gaze is much more direct, and their smile is happier than that of the other races. For instance, in images 1.23 and 1.24, some of the black social actors' faces are angled away from the viewers and represented in poverty and in urgent need of food, education and global attention.

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Image 1.23 *Image 1.24*

Although Alitalia inflight magazine designers have attempted to include all three kinds of races in general, including white, black and colored, there are vast differences between the Europeans' representations and other races' depictions. For example, white and perhaps Italian people are preferred to interact with international viewers in modernized and fashionable outfits (what they are famous for), and they often pursue a luxurious and modern way of life (Image 1.25).

Image 1.25

Black people in this inflight magazine are only objects for international viewers through the strategy of objectivation (Image 1.26, 1.27)

Image 1.26 *Image 1.27*

According to Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996 [2006]) grammar of visual design, "if the body [of the represented participants] is angled away, but their gaze, face or hand is turned towards the viewers, the picture has a double message". According to this statement, it can be claimed that image 1.28 represents black people as others wishing to interact and merge with others worldwide.

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Image 1.28   Image 1.29

It should be mentioned that objectivation, distanciation and disempowerment strategies are not only limited to black people, but also there are numerous race discrimination examples against other races and nationalities. For example, image 1.30 shows an Indian woman in a back view, which is an extreme case of distanciation and objectivation in making Indians as others and not belonging to a globalized world. In this picture, she has no individuality, no personality, no interaction and no voice and is represented just as a generic Indian who has nothing to share with an international audience.

Image 1.30   Image 1.31

Homa: Iran air inflight magazine (2016 – 2017 issues)

Iran air inflight magazine has nearly excluded most races, including black (African) and colored (East Asian) people. There are only three pictures in which white social actors are depicted within Homa inflight magazine's visual discourse. As mentioned before, the exclusion is one way for designers to make a specific group of people 'others' and strangers to the readers. Moreover, other strategies, including distanciation, disempowerment and objectivation, also have been applied for white (European) represented participants.

As it was expected, since Iran is located in the middle east and is a non-immigrant country, it was expected that any other races except for Iranian and middle eastern people would have been excluded from the visual images of this inflight magazine. Therefore, Homa inflight magazine designers have considered other races as strangers and not belonging to our world as Iranians. Even in those few pictures representing white

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(European) people, the represented participants are not looking directly at the viewers, and their faces are never shown clearly at a relatively far distance.

Image 1.32

Mahan Air: Mahan air inflight magazines: (2016 – 2017 issues)

One of the main problems in analyzing Mahan air inflight magazine is that the designers have nearly excluded almost all of the people participants from the visual images and put the focus on tourist destinations. In those few pictures in which social actors exist, there are different races and nationalities but mostly from a very far distance. Almost all of the represented participants are offered as objects to be viewed by the viewers (objectivation strategy). Black Africans, Arabs, far east Asian and Afghani people are depicted from a far social distance in an offer mood to show them as strangers to the air travelers. In other words, there is no direct eye contact (gaze) and interaction with the viewers, therefore, they are shown as generic groups of people having no individuality and no voice within this inflight magazine.

Image 1.33   *Image 1.34*

RQ #2: How do international inflight magazines depict people in terms of their age?
Age
Garuda Indonesia Airline: The Colours inflight magazine (October 2016- 2017 issues)

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According to Racelis and Salas (2007), the population of this study was divided into age groups of children (infant to 12-year-old kids) and elderly (65+), and the rest were classified as adults or the working population.

Although Garuda Indonesia inflight magazines nearly excluded the old age groups, even in those rare cases, magazine designers have attempted to depict the elderly as happy people enjoying their life together as a couple or with their family.

Image 2.1

It should be noted that there are some other cases in which the elderly are represented in poor conditions of life and also in an offer mood (Image 2.1, 2.2). This objectivation strategy means they do not belong to globalized airlines and their modern audience. In fact, most elderly have no individuality or voice among other age groups since they are depicted as others and strangers.

Image 2.1   *Image 2.2*

On the other hand, the age group of children is shown as happy individuals enjoying their lives with their families. They are often engaged in fun activities such as running, eating, playing games or musical instruments in an offer mood from varying degrees of distance.

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Image 2.3

This airline's magazines represent adults in various situations and contexts who are involved with a wide range of activities such as working, eating, traveling, driving, cooking, taking pictures, shopping, relaxing, spending time with family and having fun. Like children, there is no sign of sadness, illness, poverty and misery among adults.

Image 2.4

Air Asia: 3sixty inflight magazine (November 2017 – January 2016)

Air Asia inflight magazine designers have attempted to include almost all three general categories of age groups, including children, adults and the elderly. Children in this magazine are depicted as happy and excited individuals who are engaged in fun activities. They are always represented in straight vertical angles, which indicates equality in power relations with the viewers. They are never shown in contexts of poverty, sadness, illness or homelessness.

Image 2.5

Unlike children, the elderly and adults are depicted differently in different contexts. In many cases, the elderly are depicted as poor generic strangers from an oblique camera

angle. The long shot framing is also an indicator of distanciation and objectivation strategies. Unlike the elderly, adults are all engaged in various activities with no sign of poverty and sadness.

| *Image 2.6* | *Image 2.7* |

Qatar Airways: The Oryx inflight magazine (October 2016 – July 2017)

Qatar Airways (Oryx) inflight magazine designers have nearly excluded children and the elderly, and the majority of this magazine is the adult age groups who are enjoying their life, pursuing their goals, doing physical activities and sports, traveling, purchasing expensive products and performing active social roles within their societies.

| *Image 2.8* | *Image 2.9* |

Oman Air: Wings of Oman inflight magazine (September 2016 – July 2017)

Likewise, Oman Air inflight magazine designers have attempted to represent young people (adults) more frequently than other age categories in various contexts. Like children and the elderly, adults also are never depicted as poor, sad or homeless.

Image 2.10

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My Austria: Skyline inflight magazine (May 2017 – June 2016)

Although children and the elderly are rarely depicted in Skyline inflight magazine, the few cases of the elderly show that they are not as happy and enjoying their life as in other inflight magazines. They are mostly depicted as lonely, calm, relaxed and sometimes involved in talking with others. They are not too close or too distant from the viewers due to their medium close to medium long-shot pictures.

Image 2.11

Adults, as the dominant age group in this magazine, are frequently depicted and are mostly happy and pleasant individuals enjoying their life and engaging in fun activities. Like children and the elderly, Adults are never depicted in sadness, sickness, homelessness or poverty.

Image 2.12

Alitalia: Ulisse inflight magazine (October 2016-2017 issues)

As with other inflight magazines, adults are the majority of the age group who are mostly engaged in working and studying settings and job activities. There are depicted in both offer and demand moods in various contexts. Children and the elderly are rarely depicted in this inflight magazine.
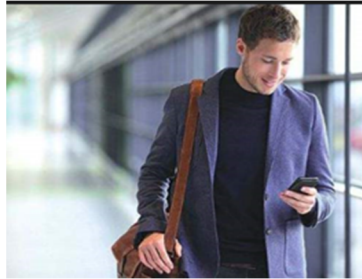
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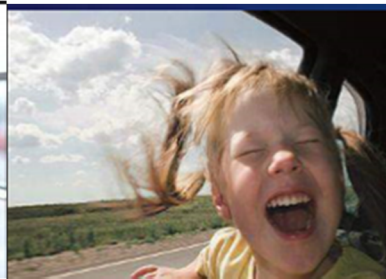
Image 2.13   *Image 2.14*

Iran Air: Homa inflight magazine (2016 – 2017 issues)

Unlike adults and children, the elderly are rarely shown in this inflight magazine. Adults are mostly engaged in their occupations and working settings or having fun with their spouses. Children who are happy and enjoying their life are engaged in fun activities such as celebrating a birthday party or playing a game.
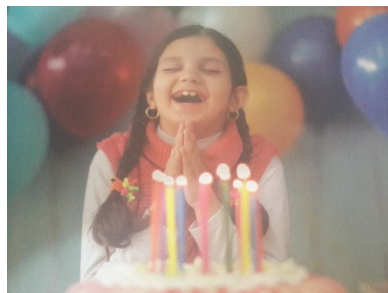
Image 2.15

Mahan air: Mahan air inflight magazines (2016 – 2017 issues)

Mahan air inflight magazine designers have attempted to include all of the age groups of children, elderly and adults with different proportions. The majority of visual images represent adult age groups who are actively engaged in fun activities. Almost all of these pictures are in offer mood in which the represented participants' faces are not clear, and they are shown from a relatively far distance or taken from a back view. It seems that the objectivation and distanciation strategies are at work in most visual images depicting different age groups.

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Image 2.16   *Image 2.17*

RQ #3: How do international inflight magazines depict people in terms of their social class?

Social Class

Garuda Indonesia: The Colours inflight magazine (October 2016- 2017 issues)

According to the categorization of different social classes in the introduction section, social class falls into four general groups of the upper class, middle class, working class, and lower class which is identified through the represented participants' professional, vocational and leisure time activities according to Van Leeuwen (2008).

Garuda Indonesia's inflight magazine designers have attempted to include almost all social classes among different groups around the world. Although there is a tendency in inflight magazines to show less low-class people due to its potential negative effect on air travelers, there were some rare cases in order to examine their presence within this inflight magazine.

This magazine frequently represents working-class occupations such as waiter/waitress, cook and shop assistant.

Image 3.1   *Image 3.2*

The interesting point is that almost all examples of European/white working-class people are making direct contact with the viewers (through their gaze, smile and demand mood), but the colored counterparts are shown from a distance (distanciation) or looking

away (objectivation) which indicates the fact that the colored working class people are depicted as strangers to the international air travelers even in their own local contexts.

Regarding middle-class people, the represented occupations included are doctors, surgeons, managers, architects, teachers, businessmen/women, pilots and flight attendants. In these inflight magazines, almost all cases of middle-class social actors are shown as involved with the viewers through their gaze, smile and demand mood, which is an indicator of their willingness to have an impact on the viewers.

Image 3.3

It can also be noted that upper-class people who are politicians, kings, queens and wealthy individuals are excluded from this inflight magazine. It can be due to the nature of inflight magazines, which only deal with nature, tourism, festivals, luxury lifestyle and whatever brings people from different backgrounds together. Consequently, writers and designers often avoid controversial topics including politics and religious matters, to create a positive sense among the readers (air travelers). Therefore, it is not surprising that the upper class is mostly excluded from these magazines.

Air Asia: 3sixty inflight magazine (November 2017 – January 2016)

Working class people are all depicted in an offer mood in the pictures and varying degrees of a medium long shot to very long shot, indicating the objectivation and distanciation techniques.
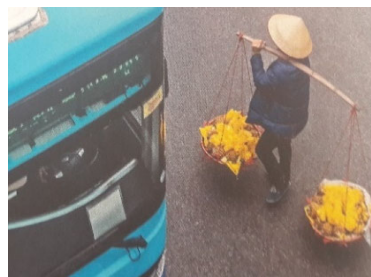

Image 3.4

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In contrast, middle-class social actors are involved with international viewers due to their demand mood, happy gestures and facial expressions in most of the cases for middle-class people depictions.

Image 3.5

Qatar Airways: The Oryx inflight magazine (October 2016 – July 2017)

Although Qatar Airways inflight magazine designers (Oryx) have attempted to include almost all types of occupations, professions and different social class people, the middle and upper-class people are the dominant social class, and the two other groups, including working and lower class are nearly excluded from the magazine's pictures. There is no example for lower classes, such as poor people and beggars. Lower-class people are completely excluded from Qatar airways' inflight magazines, which may be due to the hidden ideologies to represent this newly modernized country as a safe and ideal place to live.

Actually, the lowest social class included in this magazine is the working class individuals such as chefs in which the represented participants are shown in an offer mood (objectivation) from a very long shot distance (distanciation) to represent them as others and strangers to the international viewers.

Image 3.6

Oman Air: Wings of Oman inflight magazine (September 2016 – July 2017)

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In this inflight magazine, almost all races are included in both low and high-class jobs. Excluding the black and African race, all the other types of races, including Far East Asian, Indian, European and Middle Eastern people, are pictured as performing active social roles within the society and as an indicator of the globalized country of Oman, where all foreign nationalities are working together in peace.

Although lower, working, and upper-class social actors are nearly excluded from the visual images of Wings of Oman, the majority of the pictures are devoted to representing middle-class people. Middle-class social actors in this inflight magazine, including nurses, doctors, managers and CEOs and flight attendants, have maximum involvement with the viewers through their gaze, framing and distance, and in most cases, there's no power distance among the represented and interactive participants.

Image 3.7

My Austria: Skyline inflight magazine (May 2017 – June 2016)

Working and middle-class people are the dominant social class groups who are represented in Skyline inflight magazine. Occupations, including cooks, chefs, flight attendants and transport agents, are considered working class and involved with the viewers through the pictures' demand mood. The occupations, including doctors, managers, pilots, musicians and businessmen/women, are middle-class people who are mostly shown as objects of viewers' scrutiny through their offer mood and distanced framing. Upper-class people and occupations are also nearly excluded from Skyline inflight magazine.

Image 3.8

Alitalia: Ulisse inflight magazine (October 2016- October 2017)

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Alitalia airline's inflight magazine designers have attempted to include nearly all social classes and occupations around the world ranging from simply a street musicians to high-level occupations such as doctors and businessmen. The interesting point is that there is a tendency to represent white people as working and middle class but other races as lower class people.

Image 3.9　　　　　　　　*Image 3.10*

Iran Air: Homa inflight magazine (2016 – 2017 issues)

In Homa inflight magazine, most represented participants are working and middle-class people. Lower and upper-class social actors are totally excluded from the magazine's visual images, possibly due to their potential negative effects on the readers and air travelers. Another point to mention is the fact that the working class is represented as strangers through strategies of objectivation and distanciation, while the middle class are depicted with the most involvement with the viewers.

Image 3.11　　　　　　　　*Image 3.12*

Mahan air inflight magazines (2016 – 2017 issues)

Mahan inflight magazine designers have totally excluded upper-class people from the visual images of this magazine but have represented lower, working and middle-class participants in different settings and situations.

Working-class social actors are either shown from a very long shot (public distance) or a high vertical angle (disempowerment), indicating that they have no power, voice and individuality. Therefore, they are offered as strangers through objectivation, distanciation and disempowerment strategies.

Middle-class participants, including vets and doctors, are shown in an offer mood from a relatively far social distance, except for a female pilot who is directly looking into the camera (demand mood) in a medium close shot and low vertical angle as an indicator of power positions of cabin crew over other people.

Image 3.13   *Image 3.14*

Conclusion

To reiterate the overall findings of the present study, critical and social semiotic analysis of the visual images used in the studied international inflight magazines reveals that this type of media discourse, especially those images used in advertisements, tended to speak to the 'elite' minority (Small et al., 2008) who have sufficient wealth and time to pursue a luxury lifestyle. Along with the claims of Driver (1999), the depiction of differing consumer perceptions across various cultures and nationalities is an arduous burden on the shoulders of the airlines in the world. Therefore, advertising in inflight magazines seems to bolster the implicit discriminating discourse in the dominant ideologies.

In line with Small et al. (2008), the findings of this study also revealed that in most of the inflight magazines being studied, there is a tendency for designers to show other races, including colored and Asian people, in the western context in order to seem more globalized and accepted in the global tourism and air industry. In other words, colored and Asian people are considered a part of the international air travelers and viewers' world as long as they acculturate with the western culture and perform in a westernized context. Otherwise, when they are portrayed in a traditional local context, they do not belong to the world of the viewers. This is clearly shown through the strategies of objectivation, distanciation and disempowerment used to represent social actors as others and strangers (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

According to Aitchison (2000), the analysis of the advertisements within inflight magazines has unveiled possible underpinning discourses and networks of power, which

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are the main sources of responsibility for maintaining inequity within various social actors.

Another important point to mention is the exclusion of certain race groups from visual images in these international airlines' inflight magazines, which negatively impact the viewers of the given race group. For example, when black and African people are either totally or symbolically excluded from Oman Air, Iran Air, My Austria and Mahan Air inflight magazines, the black and African viewers might become disappointed and discouraged from traveling to the airlines' host country and the advertised destinations because they feel detached and ignored and in case of traveling to those destinations, they may feel marginalized and not welcomed. Therefore, the inflight magazine designers and developers need to consider all these nuances to include almost all kinds of people from various races, ethnicities and nationalities as a successful marketing and tourism strategy.

It can be stated that inflight magazine designers, content developers and advertisement agencies have applied certain visual and semiotic resources which reinforced bias and false stereotypes towards certain groups of people in terms of their age, race and social class originating in political, historical and ideological perceptions and standpoints of higher institutions across the world.

Although Van Leeuwen (2008) stated that images do not represent the realities of the world as they truly are and they represent different events, people and even natural phenomena based on their institutions' political and ideological standpoints in which they are produced and presented to the viewers, the findings of this study suggest that tourism advertisers and destination promoters still need to be much more aware of both subtle and blatant visual techniques and strategies to represent and depict people in terms of their race, age and social class. Since visual images deeply impact the interactive participants' and potential EFL learners' views toward people around the world with whom they had no direct or real interaction but only through visual depictions, they may feel attached or detached to/from certain groups of people.

The findings of the present study can be of potential help and use for both inflight magazine designers and EFL/ESL content developers to become aware of the importance of multi-literacy and visual literacy in imposing their desired ideologies and worldviews and also persuading the readers to attend to the advertised products, ideological contents and also tourist destinations being promoted within the magazine's visual images. In other words, foreign language learners would be able to take advantage of the findings of visual and semiotic analysis of inflight magazines as an example of authentic and real English learning material in order to be exposed to what was produced in the real world for a real

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audience and increase their semiotic awareness and visual literacy. Therefore, visual analysis can be a helpful instrument in all fields of study and practice for designers and developers to become visually literate and conscious of hidden meaning potentials and attempt to enhance the level of effectiveness in attracting viewers through the application of successful tourism and marketing strategies as well as educational purposes. More specifically, the findings of the study can be beneficiary for Iranian international airlines, including Iran Air and Mahan Air, in order to update and improve their inflight magazines' visual images and semiotic resources by comparing and contrasting the visual techniques and strategies being applied by the foreign successful international airlines to improve the level of their international inflight magazines for successful competition in a globalized world.

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