

Depiction of Family relationships in Finding Nemo (2016): Visual Analysis

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Abstract

This research is a qualitative study which investigates linguistic analysis on the children short story, Finding Nemo (2016), and sheds light on the family relationships between father and his son in this short story. This research provides the application of Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual analysis (2006).

The main aim of this study is to make a comprehensive analysis of the children short story, Finding Nemo (2016). It also aims to determine the nature of family relationships in this short story. In order to achieve these goals, visual grammar is chosen as theoretical framework of this study. So, the analysis provides the application of Kress and van

Leeuwen's Visual analysis (2006) in order to present the different aspects of visual grammar.

The visual analysis of Finding Nemo (2016) clarifies that the participants in this short story are depicted as if they are doing something, either for themselves or for the child reader. In addition to the doing participants, indirect gaze is dominant.

Key words:

Multimodality, Visual Grammar, Multimodal Analysis, Children Short Stories, Family relationships.

1. Introduction

The main aim of this study is to make a text analysis of the selected short story in order to present the relation between the family members. It investigates Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual analysis. The selected short story is taken from one of Disney movies because of their popularity all over the world among children and adults. The selected short story focuses on the relations between the father and his son.

Children literature plays essential role in their perceptions of others. It teaches children a lot about the world in which they live. Children short stories build literacy skills and pass down traditions. According to Dvalidze (2016), "Stories create magic and a sense of wonder at the world" (p. 53), they teach the children about live, themselves, and the others.

Most of the narrators of short stories for children always focus on the relationships among the family. They always give the children moral lessons through presenting these relations. Children desire relationships of warmth and friendship with their own parents. They always make comparisons between their families and other families such as their friend's families or families of short stories they read. Teachman (2009) defines the family as the bedrock of the society, it comprises of a group of parents and children. The family is a social group which is characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction (Sibanda, 2018, p.1).

Most texts are multimodal as they make use of verbal and visual semiotic systems to create meaning. Children short stories also contain verbal narrative and illustrations as well. This suggests that understanding any text is not only analyzing the written language but also analyzing the different semiotic systems and the relationships between them (Barceló, 2015, p.5).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state the elements of the interaction between the reader and the image. These elements are such as mood, perspective, social distance, lightening, colour, modality, salience, and so on. All these elements create meaning in the stories. One of the main elements which catch children's attention is colour. Colours can transmit feelings, for example yellow can refer to the feeling of happiness, and white refers to the feelings of purity.

Multimodality means that meaning does not depend on the written text only, but on reading other modes that are proposed by the author and the relationship between them to make sense of a story. Therefore, reading any text implies a multiplicity of modes. Kress (2010) defines a mode as a “socially and culturally shaped resource for meaning making”. He also states that “Different modes offer different potentials for making meaning” (p.79). In picture books such as children short stories, the elements of making meaning can be the font, the colours, the gaze of the participants, the distance, the angle, and so on.

2. Literature review

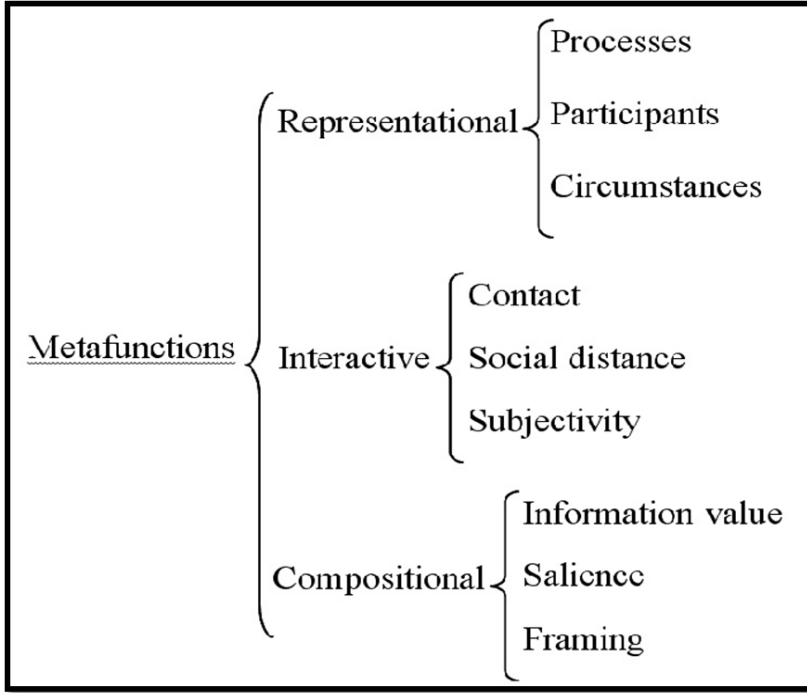
This part aims to present the theoretical framework and displays the analytical theory that the present research depends on. This theory is visual Grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

Linguists' interest in applying systemic functional approach to the analysis of semiotic texts and multimodal constructs began in 1980's (Jedema, 2001, p. 35) Halliday's social semiotic theories of communication were the springboard of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). He states that “language is a product of the social process” (Halliday, 1996, p. 89). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that images, like language, have grammar and can be analyzed in the same way of Halliday's three metafunctions in order to create three types of meaning (p. 2).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that Halliday's three metafunctions is the start for their interest of images "because it works well as a source for thinking about all modes of representation" (p. 20). These types are the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual meaning. Kress and van Leeuwen set out the first theoretical framework for investigating image as a way of communication. They point out that images also can perform three types of meaning (p. 41).

They also modify the terminology of Halliday's metafunctions into representational, interpersonal, and compositional. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state that visual images fulfill the three metafunctions of Halliday, the representational metafunction carries out the representation of the experiential world, the interpersonal metafunction represents the interaction between the participants represented in a visual design and its viewers, and the compositional metafunction which refers to the arrangements of visual resources. This framework is illustrated in the following Figure (Feng and Espindola 2013, p. 88):

Figure 2.1 Metafunctions of language (Feng and Espindola 2013, p. 88)



Multimodality

Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) assume that multimodality is the use of several semiotic modes within a socio-cultural domain in order to perform a semiotic product or an event (p. 20). This definition helps in analyzing and interpreting any picture book.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006) and O'Toole (1994; 2010) provided the basics of multimodal research in the 1980s and 1990s, based on Halliday's (1978; 1985 ;1994; 2004) social semiotic approach to language to model the meaning potential of words, sounds and images as sets of inter-related systems and structures.

Halliday's work shifted the attention from language as a solid linguistic system to a social system and how people use

language and its social functions. Halliday sets a theory of language depends on social functional of meaning and a framework for understanding language as a system of meaning potentials (Jewitt, 2013, p. 252). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explore images and visual design, and O'Toole (2010) applied Halliday's systemic functional model to a semiotic analysis of displayed art, paintings, sculpture and architecture (O'Halloran, 2011, p. 3-4).

Multimodal research aims to analyze various semiotic systems that create meaning. Multimodality's main focus is the relationship between texts and images (Yefymenko, 2017, p. 216).

The present study aims to analyze relations between the text and the image as two different semiotics modes of multimodal study. Visual and verbal narrative are discussed on the light of Halliday's three metafunctions, ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Ideational system represents reality by referring to certain objects and situations. It contains actions, characters, and circumstances. Interpersonal system establishes the interaction with the recipient. It covers the interaction between the reader and the characters. Textual meaning is realized by given more important to a specific object in the image or the text. It builds a textual structure with coherent component (Yefymenko, 2017, p. 216-217).

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996-2006) examine images on the light of these metafunctions. At the ideational system, the viewer determines whether an object of the image denotes

some action, process or is simply a conceptual representation. So images may have participants, processes and circumstances. At the interpersonal system, picture can give information or demand information. Kress and van Leeuwen in analysis reader-character relationships represent the following visual meaning systems social distance, attitude, contact and modality. At the textual level viewers, receive information according to some elements for instance, the center/margins structure. Main elements are positioned in the center, while the subsidiary elements on the margins. There are other elements of textual system such as colour, shape, or lighting (Yefymenko, 2017, p. 217).

Multimodal texts convey meaning through the interplay of a number of semiotic modes such as language, visual elements, gestures, and audio elements. Kress defines multimodality as the use of several semiotic modes (i.e., meaning-making) that interact to create meaning within a sociocultural domain (Kress, 2003, p. 5).

According to Kress (2003) asserts that we live in a visual age in which images are modes of communication through our daily life. So it is important to turn our attention to the visual mode that may be more effective than verbal mode only.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) realize the great importance of visual communication in the modern world. So they attempt to present how the visuals use structures to describe variety kinds of meanings, and they link their

analyses with interpreting and discussing visual literacy and the implications for education. The mission of Multimodal Analysis is to understand the power and meaning of texts which employ several modes such as visual, verbal, and aural (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

Jewitt (2009) states that “Multimodality describes approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms people use – image, gesture, gaze, posture, and so on ... and the relationships between them” (p. 14) (Sørensen, 2011, p. 10).

3. Research Methodology

The Research Methodology sub-section presents the analytical framework and the analytical tools that will be followed to analyze the selected data in order to answer the research questions.

In order to describe relations between family members, the researcher interprets selected Disney children’s short story Finding Nemo (2016). The reason behind choosing a Disney short story is its popularity between not only children but also young people. This short story is performed as movie at first then it is presented as a short story, so it is widely known all over the world. Finding Nemo (2016) gives moral lessons to children.

3.1 Visual Grammar

The researcher uses the following steps; first, reading the selected short story. Second, gathering all the photos that represent a family relation and the texts that describe these photos. Third, applying visual analysis following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in order to present visual categories such as, Participants, Distance, Angle, Gaze, etc. Finally the researcher set a conclusion that contains the result of the research.

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the father-son relationship in the selected short story (Finding Nemo, 2016). In order to analyze the images of this short story, the researcher uses the interactive and the compositional meta-functions. The research adopts Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar model in order to analyze the images that refer to the relationship between Nemo and his father.

The researcher begins by providing a brief description of each image, giving information about the participants who are presented in the image and the setting. Then, applies Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar through presenting the two meaning meta-functions, interactive and compositional meta-functions.

Interactive meta-function includes four principles as follows: image act and gaze, social distance, attitude, and modality. These aspects represent how the presented participants are depicted to the viewers. The first aspect is image act and gaze, the number of the demand and offer

images informs the researcher about the kind of the relationship between the viewer and the participants of each image.

The second aspect is the social distance with its aspects, very close up, close shot, medium close shot, medium shot, medium long shot, long shot, and very long shot. In each selected image, the researcher determines the social distance that the represented participants are depicted. The social distance presents whether the presented participant is intimate and close to the viewers to present degrees of involvement and feeling of cooperation, or the presented participant is stranger to the viewers.

The third aspect is the attitude which informs how social power and involvement between the presented participants and the viewers through the vertical and horizontal angles. The angle reflects who of the presented participant has equal social power with the viewer, who of the presented participants has social power over the viewers, or the viewers have social power over the participant. It reflects also whether the viewers are involved or detached from the image. The researcher counts the frequency of using vertical and horizontal angles in the selected images.

The fourth and the last aspect of the interactive metafunction is modality. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) divided the aspect of modality into three categories: high, medium, and low. These categories are based on two features; the first feature is colour, its saturation,

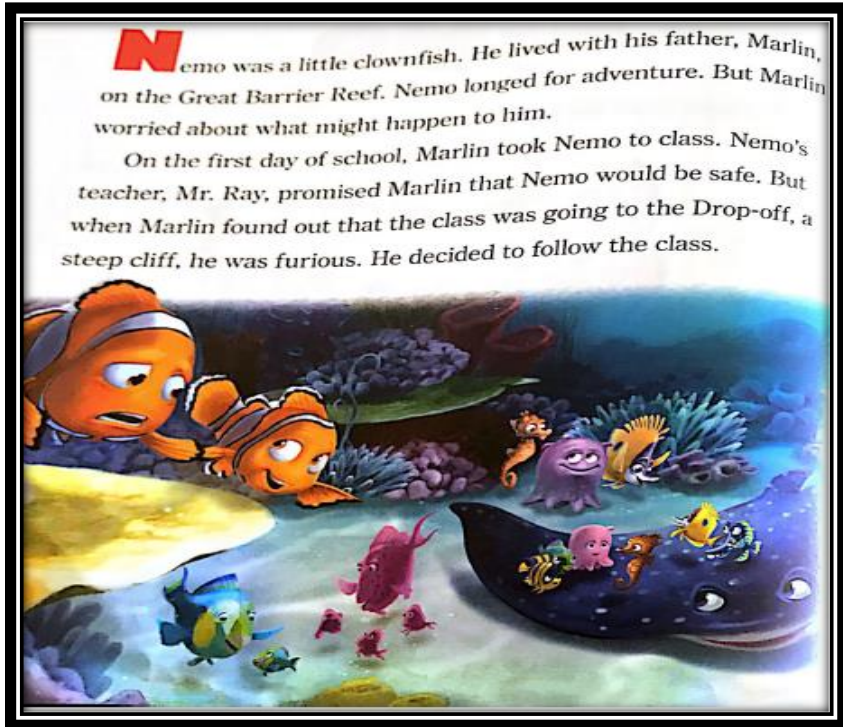
differentiation, and brightness. The second one is contextualization. The researcher labels the image that contains the two features as high modality, the image that contains only one feature as medium modality, and the black and white image and with no contextualization as low modality.

The compositional meta-function, the last meta-function, has three main aspects. These aspects are information value, salience, and framing. First the information value, the researcher presents whether the participants of each image are on the left, right, top, bottom, or center of the image in order to show how they are presented to the reader. That show if they are presented as given information or new information, ideal or realistic, or as the nucleus and center information.

The second aspect is the salience, in which the participants are represented in bigger size than other elements, by being foregrounded, by being shown in details, ..., in order to catch the viewer's attention. The last aspect is framing which presents wither the participants of the image are surrounded by a frame or not. It also shows wither the image and the text occur on the same frame or not.

4. Analysis

Figure 1 (Finding Nemo, 2016, p. 72)

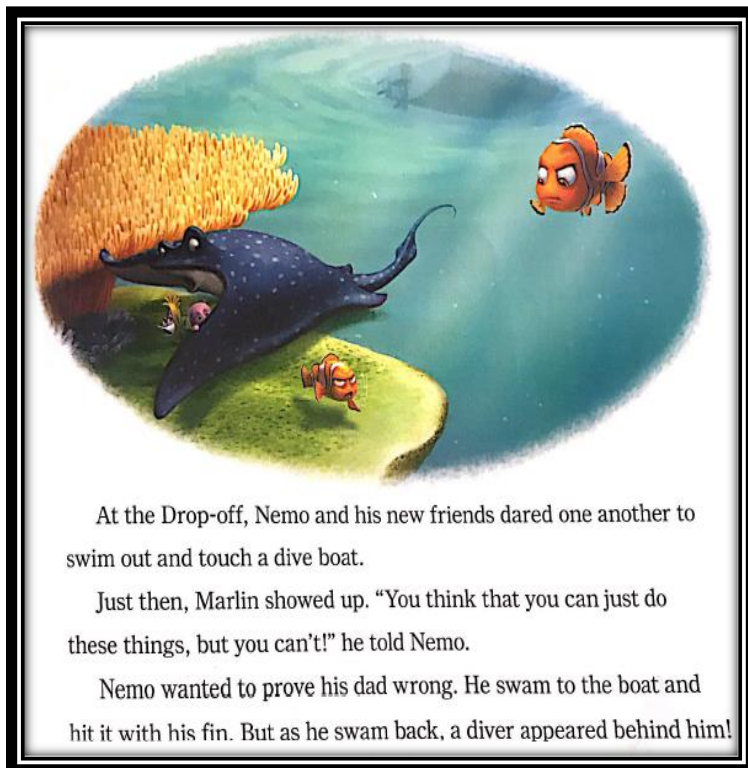


The participants in (figure 1) are Nemo, Marlin, Mr. Ray, and other little fishes with their fathers. Nemo and his father are going to school which would be considered as "**doing something**". Nemo, the other students, and their fathers are presented as happy and excited while Marlin seems to be anxious and worry. The photo indicates their close relation and love to each other. The gaze here is **offer "indirect" gaze** in which there is an absence of gaze at the viewer. In this picture, Nemo looks at his father happily and excited, while Marlin looks at Nemo in fear. The distance is **Medium long shot** which shows full figure. That indicates social connection. It presents the relation and connection between Nemo and his father. The angle here is **horizontal**,

straight axes from left to right which indicates the involvement of the viewer with the participants and their world.

This figure represents **full colour saturation**; the participants, Nemo, Marlin, Mr. Ray, and other little fishes with their fathers, are represented in high modality. This figure contains different kinds of fish in many colours, thus the differentiation here is considered as **full differentiation**. This image contains shades for all the participants, thus the modulation is considered as **many different shades**. The background presents the landscape inside the ocean and the coral reefs, hence the contextualization is considered as **detailed background**. The informative value here is **left and right**, the left side refers to the given information, which is familiar and accepted to the viewer, in this figure Nemo and Marlin occur in the left, whereas the right side refers to the new information, which is the school, other little fishes, and their fathers.

Figure 2 (Finding Nemo, 2016, p. 73)



The participants in (figure 2) are Nemo, Marlin, Mr. Ray and other little fishes. Marline and Nemo here seem to be angry with each other would be considered as **not "doing something" and static**. The gaze in this image is **offer "indirect" gaze**, in which there is an absence of gaze at the viewer. In This picture, Nemo and Marlin look at each other in anger. In this figure, the distance is **very long shot** which indicates little or no social connection between the participants. In this figure the participants are entirely visible which indicates far and impersonal distance between Marlin and Nemo. Thus that distance suggested that the viewer is acquainted but cannot form a friendship with them. It presents the anger of Marlin and Nemo of each other. The

angle here is **horizontal, oblique angle** that refers to the sense of separation between the participants and the viewer.

This figure represents **full colour saturation**; the participants, Nemo, Marlin, Mr. Ray, and other little fishes, are represented in high modality. This figure contains many bright colours, thus the differentiation here is considered as **full differentiation**. This image contains shades for most of the participants and the objects, thus the modulation is considered **as many different shades**. The background presents the blue colour of the ocean, hence the contextualization is considered as **most fully background**. The informative value here is **left and right**, the left side refers to the given information, which is familiar and accepted to the viewer, in this figure Nemo, his friends, and their teacher are on the left, whereas Marlin who is angry with his son is on the right side which refers to the new information. The Saliency in this figure is using suitable size and colours for Nemo and Merlin to focus on their anger. This figure contains two types of framing, first one is integration: the text and the picture occur together. The entire picture's items occur within one frame to assert on the group identity. That indicates the relation and conflict between Nemo and his father. The second one is rhyme: most of the pictures elements share the same colours and pattern.

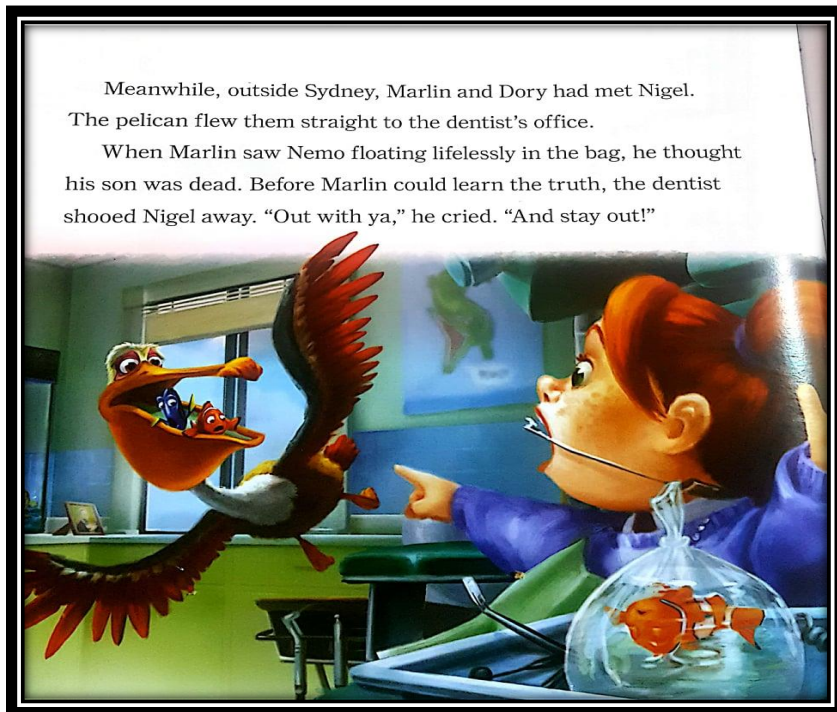
Figure 3 (Finding Nemo, 2016, p. 74)



The participants in (figure 3) are Nemo and the diver. Nemo here seem to be afraid and shock while the driver catches him which would be considered as "**doing something**". The gaze in this image is **demand "direct" gaze** in which Nemo looks at the viewer in fear asking for help. In this figure, the distance is **close shot**, which indicates personal social connection, it presents the diver who catches Nemo. In this figure only head and shoulders of the driver are entirely visible while Nemo is entirely visible in order to present his fear. The angle of this image is **vertical (A neutral or level angle)** of interaction which indicates that the participant and the viewer are equals

This figure represents **full colour saturation**; the participants, Nemo and the driver, are represented in high modality. This figure contains many different colours, thus the differentiation here is considered **as full differentiation**. This image does not contain any shades, thus the modulation is considered as **flat colour**. The background presents a small part of the ocean, hence the contextualization is considered as **most fully background**. The informative value here is **center and margin**, the center is reserved for the nucleus of information which is the driver catches Nemo, while the margin is the ocean.

Figure 4 (Finding Nemo, 2016, p. 86)

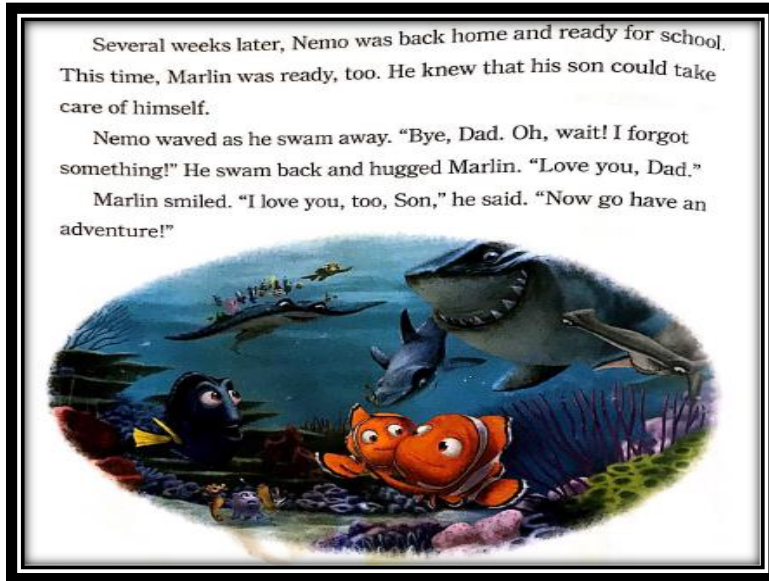


The participants in (figure 4) are Nigel, Marlin, Nemo, Dory and Darlin. Nigel here flies and takes Marlin and Dory

to the dentist's office where they find Nemo in a bag and they think that he is dead while Darlin is crying in fear when Nigel gets in. That would be considered as **"doing something"**. The gaze in this image is **offer "indirect" gaze** in which there is an absence of gaze at the viewer. In This picture, Nigel, Marlin, and Dory look at Nemo in shock and sadness, and Darlin looks at Nigel at fear. The distance here is **Medium long shot** which indicates general social connection. This figure shows full figure, it presents the shock of Nigel, Marlin, Dory when they believe that Nemo is dead. The angle here is **horizontal (straight angle)** that refers to the sense of involvement of the viewer to the picture.

This figure represents **full colour saturation**; the participants, Nemo, Marlin, Nigel, Dory, and Darlin, are represented in high modality. This figure contains many different and bright colours, thus the differentiation here is considered as **full differentiation**. This image does not contain shades of the participants, thus the modulation is considered as **flat colour**. The background presents the dentist's office, hence the contextualization is considered as **detailed background**. The informative value here is **Left and right**, the left side refers to the given information, which is familiar and accepted to the viewer, in this figure is Nigel, Marlin, and Dory trying to find Nemo, whereas the right side refers to the new information, which is the dentist's office, Darlin, and Nemo who is pretended to be dead.

Figure 5 (Finding Nemo, 2016, p. 88)



The participants in (figure 5) are Marlin, Nemo, Dory, the sharks, Mr Ray and his students. In this figure all the participants seem to be happy on first day school and excited. That would be considered as "**doing something**". The gaze in this image is **offer "indirect"** gaze in which there is an absence of gaze at the viewer. In this picture, all the picture's participants looks at Nemo and Marlin happily, and Nemo and Merlin look at eachother in love. The distance is **medium long shot** which indicates general social connection. This figure shows full figure, This picture reflects the close connection between Marlin and Nemo. The angle here is **horizontal (straight angle)** that refers to the sense of involvement of the viwer to the picture.

This figure represents **full colour saturation**; the participants, Nemo, Marlin, Dory, the sharks, Mr. Ray,

other students, and a turtle, are represented in high modality. This figure contains many different and bright colours of the fishes, the ocean, and the coral reef, thus the differentiation here is considered **as full differentiation**. This image does not contain shades of the participants, thus the modulation is considered as **flat colour**. The background presents the landscape inside of the ocean, hence the contextualization is considered as **detailed background**. The informative value here is **center and margin** composition, the center is reserved for the nucleus of information which is Nemo and Marlin, while the margin is Dory, the sharks, Mr Ray and his students who are looking at Nemo and Marlin happily.

5. Conclusion

This section is divided into two parts; the first part is the result of and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual analysis, an investigation of the analysis of the selected data and an investigation of the father – son relationship. The second part is the conclusion of the research.

5.1 Investigating the results of the analysis

Children picture books become an integral part of children formation. Children stories help kids to get an early stage on learning. They develop children's cognitive, linguistic, and logical abilities. Through reading stories, children learn how to be imaginative and creative especially in understanding different heroes from different cultures.

The visual analysis of *Finding Nemo* (2016) clarifies that the participants are depicted as if they are doing something (80%), either for themselves or for the child reader. This kind of offering or doing attract the reader's attention and makes him feels that he is a part of these stories. Also the indirect gaze is dominant (80%) The offer (indirect gaze) indicates that the participant looks away from the viewer and offering something to him. These indirect gazes of the participants who do something make the reader engaged with the charters and the events of each story. Long shots (i.e., medium long, very long shots) are dominant (80%) (i.e., medium long, 60% & very long shots 20%). Using long shots help the writer to be logical. The main theme of this story is separation and it is depicted through using long shots. So the child could believe what happen in the story. Long distance refers to the great distance between Nemo and his father, Nemo was caught by a driver and found himself in a fish tank in a dental office, while his father was in the ocean searching for him.

Full color Saturation and full differentiation are the dominant (100%), all the pictures are colorful in order to attract the children and make them more engaged with the story. Flat color is the dominant modulation, 60%. Painters of these short stories do not use many shades to help the children to focus more on the stories' events. Detailed background is dominant (60%) which make the story seems to be real and believable to the child. Straight horizontal angle is preferred (60%); Using straight horizontal angles

indicates the involvement of the viewer into the image. The child can feel that he is involved in the stories. The dominant composition is left and right which make it easy for the child to concentrate and to know the sequence of the story's events makes the child reader more interesting.

5.2 Investigating family relations

Finding Nemo (2016) presents father-son relationship. The painter uses offer (indirect) gaze in order to present the events and actions to the viewer. There is only one time in which the painter uses demand (direct) gaze, when the driver catches Nemo, Nemo looks directly to the viewer asking him something, may be asking for help. The painter uses medium long shots the most, to reflect the conflict and the great distance between Marlin and Nemo throughout the story.

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