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Positive aspects of women of different cultures: an analysis of two multimodal covers

Keywords

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Abstract

We live in a society surrounded by texts where the visual dominates. Moreover, images reflect and influence the expression of social life, culture and the values of a community. The discourse of covers is multimodal by nature and emphasizes modes of communication that are not written. The visual mode is the most important in order to catch readers' attention. In this article I analyse two covers of the magazine Antena Misionera in which a woman from a different culture is represented. I have selected these texts because, in general, the images selected by the media represent certain attitudes of people towards immigrants. The selection of the covers is motivated by my interest on immigration, in other cultures and in the image of women represented in the press. The different visual elements that are found in these covers provide a basis for describing the meanings embedded within the images of immigrant women and provide examples of the portrayal of a non-stereotypical view of this group of immigrants.

1. Introduction

We live in a society surrounded by texts in which the dominant mode is the visual. For this reason, in the last decades there has been a great interest in analysing modes of communication other than language. Baldry (2000), Kress (2003), Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Matthiessen (2007) highlight the multimodal character of our societies in which meanings are expressed through a combination of semiotic resources. They point out that it is common to find gestures, images and sounds accompanying language.

Texts are always part of a social context. They “help to constitute, the contexts in which they function [and are] inseparable parts of meaning-making activities in which they take part” (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 3). Hence, after the different resources to create meaning in both covers are analysed I will explore the relationship between texts and society and how this has an effect on the way readers perceive these texts.

In our society we have the possibility of choosing different linguistic and visual choices to express meanings. These choices create a particular idea of social realities and of social groups. For this reason, the different linguistic structures chosen to express meanings and the visual characteristics of images can alter or influence the way in which meanings are perceived or interpreted.

The printed media are one of the crucial components in the process of the social construction of reality. They have the capacity to create representations that contribute to the making of social identities a large influence on our knowledge, our values and our social relations. For this reason, we need to become more attuned to analysing the language and visual characteristics of the media in order to develop a critical attitude. As Baeza (2001: 10) notes:¹

[...] a great contemporary paradox is that it is becoming common that a great number of messages do not keep us well informed. Images play a crucial place in this process, which is situated between the indifference of journalists paying attention just to the word and the increasing exploitation of visual resources that persuasive visual communication is doing.²

Our main social and political knowledge and our beliefs about the world result from the amount of information that we read or listen through the media, i.e., many pieces of information are not known through personal experiences. One of the most important and most interesting aspect of the role of the media in society is the way in which people and facts are represented. For example, Bañón (2002) highlights that the majority of our information about immigrants comes through the media, and that is why the representation of immigrants becomes a ‘mediatized phenomena’. However, journalists may not be aware of their ethnocentrism and some of the contexts of their articles are based on stereotypes. Bañón (2002: 78) points out:

1. The quotations that are originally in Spanish as the following one, are translated by the author.
2. The original of this quotation is the following: “[...] una enorme paradoja contemporánea es que cada vez más un mayor número de mensajes nos tiene peor informados. Y la imagen juega un papel determinante en este proceso, situada entre la indiferencia de los periodistas de la palabra y la explotación creciente de los recursos visuales que está haciendo la comunicación persuasiva.” (Baeza 2001: 10)

3. The original of this quotation is the following: "En lo que respecta a la discursivación de la discriminación y de la inmigración, nos fiamos de los medios de comunicación y acabamos teniendo la sensación de que conocemos estos discursos tal cual fueron generados, obviando un hecho fundamental: lo que conocemos, normalmente, son versiones o fragmentos de los mismos notablemente descontextualizados." (Bañón 2002: 78)
4. The original of this quotation is the following: "Creo que no se puede hablar de interculturalidad si no existe la menor voluntad de conocer las demás culturas y, *a fortiori*, de reconocer el derecho a la identidad cultural de los otros." (de Lucas 2006: 37–38)

As regards making discrimination and immigration discursive, we trust the media and we end up having the feeling that we know these discourses as they were created, obviating a fundamental idea: what we get to know, normally, are just versions or fragments of facts and sometimes they are out of context.³

Broadly speaking, people from other cultures, especially from African and Arabic countries tend to be presented in two main ways:

1. They are presented as a danger, as a threat because they invade our territory. In this case readers react against them.
2. They are represented as poor people that live in a dramatic situation, surrounded by terrible conditions. In this case readers feel compassion for them.

Rodrigo and Gaya (2003) show that ethnocentric information or 'intercultural misunderstandings' always have a negative effect on the image of other cultures, and are present in journalism. The fact that people from other cultures are represented in a negative way implies that interculturalism is not highlighted, as de Lucas (2006: 37–38) points out: "I believe we cannot talk about interculturalism if there is no wish to know the other cultures and, *a fortiori*, to recognize the right of cultural identity of others".⁴ Over the past few years in Spain, we have been deluged with many different pieces of information about the situation of people from different cultures, especially women from Arabic and African countries, in the printed media. The written and visual information are almost always negative. The images are usually very elaborate and their main aim appears to be to evoke pity because the editor/photographer/journalist wants to touch those viewing them. The positive aspects of these people, their culture and countries, hardly ever appear (Martínez Lirola in press). This may be because these aspects are not so spectacular and they do not sell magazines.

One of the few publications which presents positive aspects of women from different cultures is the magazine *Antena Misionera*. It does not confine itself to images of poor or sad or exotic immigrants. This is somewhat surprising but also inspiring.

According to Cross (2006: 185), "Images reflect, represent and reveal a community's values, norms, culture and history". So, positive representation of women from different cultural backgrounds is essential because it goes together with the perception of a determined reality in society, and their accompanying attitudes and social values. It impacts on people's views and attitudes towards immigrants and those from different cultural backgrounds.

In this paper, two covers of the magazine *Antena Misionera* (May and December 2006), in which a woman is represented will be analysed. My aim is to begin to explore the questions: How are immigrant women represented in this magazine? How are these meanings created through the

resources of the multimodal texts? I intend to explore the way in which resources combine in these texts to create meaning.

When observing the characteristics of the women represented in the two covers, it can be observed that prejudices and stereotypes are not promoted because the women are represented in a positive way: clean, smiling, etc. The selection of both covers is motivated by my interest in immigration, other cultures and the image of women presented in the printed media. I will analyse the different visual elements that create these covers to understand their meaning and to observe how Spanish society's view of women from different cultures is created.

As regards the other magazine covers of *Antena Misionera* published in 2006, there are some similarities between them: they share the same structure and have a light background and strong frames (see section 4 for a detailed description of these characteristics). However, when children appear on the covers, they are sad and not clean, as can be observed for example on the cover of October 2006, where there is a child crying.

Moreover, the main part of the cover does not always have a big picture of just one person, as happens with the covers under analysis. Sometimes the photograph on the right and centre of the cover is smaller, it appears at the edge of the cover instead of in the centre of it, and there is more than one person represented, as happens with the cover of July 2006. This implies that the persons represented are given less importance than the women on the two covers of May and December. Another difference is that in most covers collected, the colours used are dark in the main image (grey, black and brown) whereas in the two under analysis the colours are bright (see section 4).

2. Media representations of cultural difference

It is necessary to take into consideration that we can only see and perceive reality from the situation surrounding us. That is why we need to be aware of our situations and our limitations because they make our perception of reality limited. It should be kept in mind that it is the photographer who decides what part of reality he/she wants to transmit every time, and for that reason, those images or those pieces of news are always a partial vision of reality. This makes that we, those receiving the information or the images, are just consumers of what has been selected by the photographer. Due to this consumers should not create conclusions on the total reality just by observing the fragmented reality offered by the image.

Media texts are produced by authors who live in a determined political and social context; for this reason, these texts are better understood if those contexts are taken into consideration (Beard 2001: 3; Alexander 2008: 3; Blackledge 2009: 4; Martin 2009: 154). There is always a close relationship between the texts and the society or culture in which they are framed. This relationship is so close that whenever changes are produced in a determined society or culture, these changes are also reflected in the texts.

5. The original of this quotation is the following: "La naturaleza que habla a la cámara es distinta de la que habla al ojo; distinta sobre todo porque, gracias a ella, un espacio constituido inconscientemente sustituye al espacio constituido por la conciencia humana." (Benjamín 2004: 26)

The press, and being more concrete the writer or editor, have power to persuade or to manipulate the image of a determined institution or group of people. As Benjamin (2004: 26) makes clear: "The nature that speaks to the camera is different to that speaking to the eye, it is different mainly because, thanks to it, a place that is created unconsciously substitute the place created by human conscience".⁵

In many cases citizens do not have a clear view of reality, especially of those people and facts that are not part of our daily life as it happens with women from Arabic or African countries (Aixelá 2000; Vidal 2007; Martínez Lirola 2008). This is determined by the fact that it is the journalist or photographer who decides what part of reality is transmitted and what is omitted. The selection of images has a clear impact on the representation of reality, which implies that the person receiving the image tries to decode the meanings hidden in the image and their purpose. In other words, each text has an ideology and a cultural frame of reference that are offered to the reader. For this reason we need to be critical to question and criticise the view of reality transmitted by the press.

In addition, it is necessary to take into consideration that any text does not exist independently of the readers that expand its meaning by adding their own cultural visions and attitudes. Each reader recreates the text when he/she reads or rereads it because there are no readings that are the same. This makes readers active participants in the process of reading instead of passive recipients of accepted ideas. If readers assume an active role in the creation of new meanings, this implies that the text does not have just one meaning and that this meaning is not permanent (Beard 2001: 4).

There is an implied reader to whom texts are addressed and from whom a determined answer, reaction or attitude is expected. This is determined by the way in which multimodal texts are created: what is included and what is excluded in them, that which is outstanding and what makes of that the most salient feature, how are the different persons, places or things represented, etc.

The way in which texts are interpreted depends on what readers add to the text as much as on what the authors have put into the texts when they were created. Images are crucial in the process of persuading the reader to accept a particular image of people from other cultures. As Borchers (2002: 165) highlights: "Like words, images are symbols that are building blocks of persuasive messages. Images communicate in ways that words cannot."

3. Methodology and theoretical position

The discourse of covers and magazines is multimodal in nature and emphasizes ways of communication that combine written and visual texts to catch the reader's attention (Martínez Lirola 2006a: 250; Abril 2008: 81). Analysis of multimodal texts needs to take into consideration that:

1. The elements that create the text (verbal and non-verbal) must be complementary, i.e., they must have a close relationship. The images must be helpful to identify the context of situation.

2. Everything that is part of the multimodal text (type of letters, place in which the image appears, vocabulary and grammatical structures used, etc.) contribute to the creation of meaning in the text and has a clear and direct influence on the reader (Beard 2001; Richardson and Burrige 2008).
3. The verbal and non-verbal elements cannot be considered as two independent units that appear together. They need to be understood and read as a whole inside the text that they create.

Since I intend to analyse both covers in their context, this article will employ the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL). This linguistic school analyses texts in context and provides a means to describe and analyse the written language and the visuals that appear in those texts and how they are connected with the society in which they are located. In other words, SFL allows us to understand why the texts under analysis are created the way they are. Martínez Lirola (2006a: 250) has pointed out that this theoretical framework is relevant to multimodal analyses because it pays attention to the “interrelationship between language, text and the contexts in which those texts occur, and because it includes a social perspective in the study of language”.

SFL is a lexico-grammatical theory in which the concept of choice is essential because language or any other semiotic system is created as ‘networks of interlocking options’ (Halliday 1994: xiv). The speakers of a language can select in the system of options those choices that they consider appropriate according to the meaning they want to transmit. The meaning that is expressed is then completely dependent on the options selected from the system of language.

SFL expresses a grammar of meanings through the functions of language. According to Halliday (1978), these functions are: the *textual* function which is concerned with how information is organized in a text; the *interpersonal* function which is concerned with the language used in interactions to express attitudes, judgments or feelings; the *ideational* function which is concerned with the expression of experience of the world or the perceptions.

In addition to Halliday’s SFL, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) analytical tools of visual grammar will also form a framework for this article. Their visual grammar facilitates the analysis of the different visual resources chosen in the two covers under consideration to express the meanings and to catch the readers’ attention. Drawing from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 177), three main aspects of composition will be considered in the multimodal texts:

- ‘Information value’: the location in which the different elements are placed in the text, for example, from left to right, from the top to the bottom, from the centre to the margins, etc., which can add a determined value to them.
- ‘Salience’: selected element(s) try to catch the readers’ attention, for example, appearing in a prominent position, the size, the colour/s, the colour contrast, or differences in sharpness.

6. The original of this quotation is the following: “investigar cómo se articulan los significados y el poder a través de las imágenes y el texto escrito que encontramos en los textos multimodales”. (Martínez Lirola 2006b: 154)

- ‘Framing’: the presence or absence of frames that connect or disconnect certain meanings, reinforcing whether they go or do not go together.

In addition to these aspects of the page layout, I will also consider placement of the headings, photograph or image, the use of colour, and the concept of prominence. Paying attention to these elements, I intend to answer the following questions: “Who and what are the kinds of people, places and things depicted in this image, and how do we recognize them as such? What ideas and values do we associate with these depicted people, places and things, and what is it that allows them to do so?” (van Leeuwen 2001: 92). By focussing on these I hope to be able to contribute to answering the questions posed in the introduction of this article: How are immigrant women represented in this magazine? How are these meanings created through the resources of the multimodal texts?

With these questions I intend “to investigate how are meanings and power created through the images and the written text that is found in the multimodal texts” (Martínez Lirola 2006b: 154).⁶

4. Analysis of two covers of *Antena Misionera* with immigrant women

All the covers of the magazine *Antena Misionera* during the year 2006 were collected. From this corpus, only two covers contained images of women from other cultures so they were chosen in order to analyse the presence or absence of positive or negative views of these women.

Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the main visual components to pay attention to in the analysis will be: the page layout – placement of the headings, image/s and information value; salient element on the cover; the use or lack of use of frames in the cover, the use of colour, and the photograph or image employed. The two covers under analysis are multimodal texts because they include two different modes of communication: the linguistic and the visual, which are understood as a single unit in which there are different resources (Thibault 2000: 321).

The way in which the page is organised guides the reader’s attention to different parts of the multimodal text (Talbot 2007; Liffen 2008). The visual elements in these covers are carefully selected to persuade the reader and to show a particular view of a certain part of reality, in this case of women of different cultures (see Table 1). I will begin by providing a general analysis of the magazines’ front covers before I consider each cover individually and the main multimodal component, containing the image of an immigrant woman. I will finish this section with a comparison of the two front covers (see figures 1 and 2).

The overall layout of the magazine is consistent across each issue. On the left side of both covers we find a white column divided in three parts in which is found the headings of the three main news items in the magazine. The three headings are together with a small photograph that illustrates the topic. I will not concentrate on this part of the cover because that is not the main aim



Figure 1: Cover of Antena Misionera May 2006.



Figure 2: Cover of Antena Misionera December 2006.

of this article. However, it is important to point out that in this section of the cover the colours garnet and black are always employed for the letters and while the photographs that appear with the short headings are small, they illustrate the heading.

It is also common in this magazine to find the title of the magazine at the top of the cover in a header, and placed on the right hand side, in the area for new information. The title is always written in white letters on a garnet-coloured 'box' background header. Although they are not capital letters, they are clearly distinguished through the use of bold font. On the left hand side of the garnet header there is a map of the world, which contains the colours blue, yellow and green. This map contrasts with the garnet background. At the bottom of the header, in smaller letters, is the following written information (from left to right): (a) Magazine Antena Misionera, (b) the number, the year and the month and (c) the web page of the magazine: www.antenamisionera.org

The following table offers shows the main visual characteristics of the covers analysed:

Visual characteristics	Text 1. Date: May 2006	Text 2. Date: December 2006
Background	Light background. It contrasts with the face and the clothes of the woman	Light background. It contrasts with the face and the clothes of the woman
Layout (placement of image on the page)	Right, covering almost half of the cover.	Right side of the cover
Information value (placement)	Given and New: New information appears on the right-hand side of the page	Given and New: New information appears in the center of the page
Salient element (Size)	Quite big in comparison with the rest of the elements in the cover	Quite big in comparison with the rest of the elements in the cover
Frames	Frame: strong	Frame: strong
The protagonists' facial expressions	Serious, thinking, frowning and staring	Open smile and cheerful eyes
The protagonists' interaction with the reader (gaze)	She does not look to the readers, no interaction is requested	She looks at the readers openly, her eyes engage the eyes of the viewer
Colours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark skin • Bright clothes (green, yellow and purple) and clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark skin • Bright clothes (blue and white) and clean

Table 1: Main visual characteristics of the covers analysed.

4.1 Analysis of Text 1. Date: May 2006

The most important woman represented on this cover appears on the right side of the page, in the area for new information, i.e., in the area given most prominence. The left side normally has elements that are less important than those appearing on the right since. This is the area for 'known' information because on this side are found the elements that are normally known by the reader – they are the 'given'. The right side, that of 'new' information, is where the elements that are more important are located and where the reader should concentrate his/her attention (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 181). In this cover it is the image of the woman that is in the most important and prominent position on the page. The background is light and it contrasts with the face and the clothes of the woman represented.

The photograph of the woman takes up almost half of the page. It consists of a woman in profile, serious, thinking, frowning and staring. In this way the woman is the most salient aspect of the page and is highlighted. She does not look at the readers, which implies that she does not expect any interaction with the readers. Readers can view her if they choose, she does not demand their attention.

At the same height as the woman's chin it is found the specific title of this issue: "La marginación de la mujer" (*Women on the fringe*). The written text is clearly highlighted because it is written in white letters, in the font style that the title of the magazine is written. This creates a visual connection between the magazine's title and the title for this issue.

We know it is a woman from a different culture because her skin is darker than Spanish people (Martínez Lirola 2008) and she wears a veil on her head with bright colours (green, yellow and purple). The colours of her veil contrast with the black of her hair and unite with the yellow of her dress. Although she is an old woman, the fact that she wears bright colours gives her vividness and expression. This also emphasises a cultural contrast as old women in Spanish society wear black or dark, sombre colours.

4.2 Analysis of Text 2. Date: December 2006

The main image of a woman in this cover appears in the centre of the page, taking up the main part of the cover. This is another example of layout where main image is placed on the right side of the cover, with the left side containing image/written text that represent the other parts of the issue. One of the most outstanding features of this cover is the smile on her face. In addition, the woman faces the viewer frontally, i.e., her eyes engage the gaze of the viewer. She looks directly at the readers, trying to interact with them and sharing her happiness with them. Nobody would doubt the happiness of this woman due to the vividness of her eyes and her open smile.

There is a clear contrast between the background of the photograph and the woman. The background is a light colour, similar to Text 1, which highlights the image of the woman. Her skin is dark and the colours of her clothes are bright, i.e., she is covered with a blue veil with a design imprinted

in blue and white. She is the salient part that attracts the viewer's attention. Approximately a centimetre from her chin, at the bottom of the page, is the title of this issue "Feminismo en el Islam" (*Feminism in Islam*). It is distinguished because it is framed in a white square and because it is written in garnet letters, the same colour as the background of the title of the magazine "Antena Misionera". Its importance is also highlighted through the use of capitals.

The woman is younger than the one represented in Text 1 and, contrasts with her in other ways – she seems to be happy and enjoying here life , she does not seem to be worried. Both women have an earring in their nose, a decorative feature used by many Muslim and African women.

4.3 Comparison of the two covers from Antena Misionera

Although in both covers there is a very short title about the specific topic that is discussed in each magazine, i.e., "Women on the fringe" and "Feminism in Islam", in both cases we have a clear idea of the central topic of each issue. It can be observed that in none of the headings there are verbs and the main idea of both issue is conveyed using a noun group. These headings have a persuasive function because they try to catch the readers' attention and ensure they become interested in reading the pieces of news presented in the magazine.

From the analysis of both covers it is clear that there is a similar relationship of coherence between the heading of the magazine (at the top of the page) and the specific heading of each issue (at the bottom of the page), though realised through different aspects of colour. This coherence in the organisation of the page assists to guide the reader to the image, the written text or the heading. Colour carries a significant amount of meaning in both covers, apart from creating coherence. The repetition of colours has the effect of pointing out that the different elements of the text are connected; it is a principle of visual grammar that the connection of elements can be achieved through the repetition of formal elements, of shades or of colours (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Bell and Garrett 1998). Another role of colour is to catch the reader's attention. In both cases bright colours are found in the women's clothing, which establishes a contrast with the colours used for the written text and the backgrounds.

The most salient element is the image in both covers. In general, the image tends to be the most prominent element because it is the largest and it seems to dominate the written text. Moreover, frames are used to highlight the image in both covers; they are both presented apart from the rectangle at the top of the page in which the heading is found and from the white rectangle on the left that frames the three main articles presented in the magazine. It is obvious that in both covers, photographs are used to add a sense of immediacy and reality to the multimodal text in such a way that it facilitates the interaction with the reader.

The analysis points out that both covers have similarities in the overall page layout, information value, backgrounds, use of colours, most salient element and the use of frames (see table 1). In comparison, the

interaction between the reader and the image of the immigrant woman in each cover is different. Text 1 offers the image of the woman to the reader to peruse and consider in relation to her emotions. While the woman in Text 2 demands the reader look at her and be involved in her happiness.

The fact that both women wear bright clothes and are clean has the function of creating a positive view of both women to Spanish readers. In both covers colours are not used as a tool to oppress and exploit women from other cultures. This implies an anti-racist perspective and respect for diversity because both women's clothes point out that they are not Spanish.

Although both women are different to the main group (Spanish society), they are not represented as threatening or excluded through being dirty or wearing torn clothes. If this happened, both images would manipulate mental models of readers in a negative way by reproducing stereotypes that highlight the subordination of ethnic minority groups and prejudices which denigrate them.

Both women are social actors with certain physical characteristics that identify them in the given context of the cover and in the given context of culture. Moreover, ethnic identities in both covers are not represented negatively or threateningly distinct from the norm.

5. Images and representations of immigrant women

Images are representations that express certain meanings. The photograph is the central element in the narrative used by the magazine print media. It situates the context of the text and sometimes it is the first contact that readers have with a multimodal text. Being able to read the underlying meanings of multimodal texts, like the covers of magazines, implies that we need to be critical readers to know what is hidden behind each choice that creates the text. As Martínez Lirola (2006b: 166) explains:

The different choices found in the texts [...]– the letters type (capital, bold, etc.), the size, the colours, the different ways in which elements are placed in multimodal texts (at the top or at the bottom, on the right or on the left) have an effect on the creation of meanings and it affects our attention when reading a page because there is normally a hierarchical relationship between the elements.

In this sense, the visual aspects of multimodal texts have to be understood framed in the social context in which the texts are 'consumed'. The person who designs the text does it carefully and with a very clear idea of what the text is intended to do to the reader, what should the reader see in the first place and the ideas the text will transmit because of the way it was created. As Martínez Lirola's (2006a: 254) states: "[...] the designer is influenced by the social circumstances in which the text is composed, and because he/she also considers the circumstances in which these texts will appear and do their job."

7. The original of this quotation is the following: "Las diferentes elecciones que encontramos en los textos (hemos de tener presente que la GSF propone una gramática de la lengua como elección y observa cómo las elecciones construyen el contexto) – la tipología de las letras (mayúsculas, negrita, etc.), el tamaño, los colores, las diferentes maneras en que se colocan los elementos de los textos multimodales (arriba o abajo, a la derecha o a la izquierda) tiene un efecto en la construcción de los significados y condiciona cómo nuestra atención varía al leer una página debido a que suele haber una relación jerárquica entre los diferentes elementos." (Martínez Lirola 2006b: 166)

In considering the analysis of the two covers of the magazine *Antena Misionera* it is clear that an image is never neutral. Its expression is completed with a determined purpose; it is always designed with certain objectives and needs. In addition, the image is not something external to a human being because it is created in the reader's mind where it is filtered by his/her social or ethnographic characteristics (Martínez Lirola 2006b: 156).⁷ Through the interpretation of the image in the covers, readers are encouraged to view immigrant women in a positive way.

The different resources used in these covers to represent women from other cultures constitute unexpected patterns because this group of women are usually represented in a negative way in Spanish magazines. In other words, these texts from the same genre serve the social purpose of highlighting positive aspects of women from other cultures, instead of highlighting their negative characteristics.

6. Concluding remarks

Any kind of press has a clear social responsibility. As a result, media products (magazine covers, pieces of news, headings, etc.) have considerable impact on the views of the men and women that are in contact with these products. This is why responsible journalism must pay attention to the visual and its discursive use in the creation of their messages, especially in multimodal texts. The headings of newspapers and magazines guide the readers towards the world view they want to transmit, i.e., they offer readers information determined by the context in which they are framed and created with a clear objective according to the interest and the ideology of the newspaper or the magazine.

The positive representation of immigrant women in the *Antena Misionera* covers demonstrate that certain changes proposing the improvement of the status and the situation of women are taking place, at least on paper. It is a very positive move as it implies an acceptance that there are other cultures in the world. This acceptance assists the development of our world views, to favour attitudes of understanding and respect towards the ways others act and behave. Furthermore, it is crucial to counteract certain groundless stereotypes that places Spanish culture as superior and perfect to the characteristics of other cultures which are criticised.

Since we need to be active citizens in our society, we need to develop a critical perspective when reading the texts that employ different modes to express their meaning. We need to be able to analyse what is hidden in the texts, in the language, in the discourses, giving special attention to the language used by the media. The positive representation of women of different cultures in the press, as it happens in the two covers from *Antena Misionera* analysed, allows the readers to enlarge the way they perceive the world and to develop respectful attitudes towards people from other cultures and to shift their stereotypical views.

A knowledge of visual grammar can make readers more critical and able to decode the messages implied in print media texts. In addition, it allows us to establish relationships between the

multimodal texts, the discourses that they use and the societies in which they are framed. In this sense, we need to take into consideration that texts are given meaning in the contexts in which they are produced, distributed and consumed, following van Dijk (2000: 32):⁸ “Media discourse is produced, understood and analysed in relationship with the characteristics of its context”.

In my view, the images of women from other cultures should show the reality and range of their cultures and countries as well as their current lives in Spain. The images should not be limited to representations of the negative side of their reality. Moreover, they must be images that invite readers to reflect on the way of living and the customs of these countries. Finally, all these images should show respect to the people and their cultures. In this sense, the two covers analysed contribute to dispelling the cultural and ideological stereotypes of Western societies through which people from other cultures are rejected. The positive representation we have observed suggests that the dominant cultural group (Spanish society) needs to learn from other cultures and challenge their stereotypes.

8. The original of this quotation is the following: “El discurso de los medios se produce, comprende y analiza en relación con las características de su contexto”. (van Dijk 2000: 32)

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