

## **A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Relationship between Pi and Richard the Tiger in the Movie Life of Pi**

**Yonghong Cheng & Wenyu Liu\***

### **Abstract**

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Film discourse is a typical of multimodal discourse which contains many semiotic modalities such as image, text, sound and music. Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) focuses on how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication as opposed to just language. The MDA assisted film discourse analysis helps understand films through the interaction among different modalities as well as offer a linguistic perspective to film appreciation. Life of Pi, the winner of four Academy awards for direction, photography, visual effect and original music, makes up a good sample rich in audial and visual resources to explore the relationship between Pi and the tiger Richard. Under the guidance of systemic functional grammar and visual grammar, the study attempts to explore the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger in film Life of Pi by analyzing how various semiotic modalities make meaning and how they contribute to understanding the film. The findings suggest that: theoretical framework based on functional grammar and visual grammar is adaptive for the film discourse Life of Pi; by virtue of linguistic and non-linguistic analysis, the relationship between Pi and the tiger is mostly determined by Pi's attitude toward the tiger; various modalities interact to make meaning, which provides a new perspective for film appreciation. The study helps broaden the linguistic understanding of film discourse, and provides a new perspective to understand film, thus improving audience's level of film appreciation.

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**Keywords:** multimodal discourse analysis; Life of Pi; Systemic-functional grammar; Visual grammar

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\* Dalian University of Technology, China. Email: [liuwuy@dlut.edu.cn](mailto:liuwuy@dlut.edu.cn)

## 1. Introduction

Discourse analysis has essentially contributed to the study of language "in use." Multimodal discourse as a combination of many different semiotic resources has made a frequent presentation in the public.

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), as the confluence of discourse and technology, is becoming paradigm in discourse studies which extends the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music and sound(O'Halloran,2011)<sup>[10]</sup>. The film medium, as a classic type of multimodal discourses, "parallels a significant dimension of our experience of the world: it involves sequences of change and repetition in the visual and auditory realm (O'Halloran, 2004)<sup>[11]</sup>." Besides, film can be considered as a "multimodal articulation of multiple and integrated discourses" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001).<sup>[6]</sup> Since film guides the audience to experience the world through combination of hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch, how these different semiotic resources interact with each other to make meaning becomes one of the research objects of multimodal discourse analysis. All these factors lead to the fact that film has become an obvious candidate for consideration as a multimodal artifact.

Nowadays, film discourse as a typical of multimodal discourse is mainly discussed from the perspective of literary criticism, aesthetics and philosophy. MDA assisted film discourse analysis may help promote comprehensive understanding of films from the perspective of linguistics, as well as composite a multimodal appreciation of meaning grounded in both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Film music, as a component of non-linguistic resources, generally contains eight functions.<sup>[2]</sup> Based on these important functions, film music is selected as one of the analyzing object in this thesis together with another non-linguistic resource—visual images.

Most studies on MDA mainly focus on the visual images guided by visual grammar, without sufficient attention to verbal text and sound in multimodal discourse. To comprehensively understand multimodal analysis, especial film discourse, it is worthwhile to conduct an integrated analysis of various modalities by combining the existing analysis methods. Therefore, the focus would be equally put on verbal, visual and audial analysis of film discourse *Life of Pi*, as much as possible, hoping to present a comprehensive understanding of this film.

*Life of Pi* was selected for multimodal discourse analysis in that its popularity among the audience makes the film a hot topic in various fields. *Life of Pi*, directed by Ang Lee in 2012, tells a story about teenager Pi's adventure on the ocean with a tiger named Richard Parker. The film features an open ending, which leaves the audience space to understand this film on personal perspective.

*Life of Pi*, the winner of four awards for direction, photography, visual effect and original music in the 85th Oscar, provides rich audial and visual resources for the discussions triggered by its plot on the relationship between Pi and the tiger Richard. This study intends to explore the interplay between different semiotic resources and how the interplay makes meaning and reflects the relationship between Pi and Richard Parker during their adventure, thus help appreciate the film.

## 2. Literature Review

With the publication of *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design* by Kress and Leeuwen (1996)<sup>[7]</sup>, which is based on Halliday's (2004)<sup>[3]</sup> Systemic Functional Grammar for linguistic analysis, as well as with O'Toole's (1994)<sup>[12]</sup> multimodal analysis of paintings, sculpture and architecture, MDA has become a new research subject for linguists. Since multimodal discourse embodies various resources or modes (including language, image, music, gesture and architecture) which are on the strength of sensory modalities (such as visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic) (O'Halloran 2011)<sup>[10]</sup>, the key focus is on the equal stress of both linguistic (verbal) and non-linguistic (visual, audial and other) semiotic resources. Unlike usual text or discourse, film discourse, as a typical of multimodal discourse, is concerned with a variety of different semiotic resources, including language, technology, visual image, sound, music, color and even the interaction of three dimensions. What's mentionable is that music as a semiotic resource in multimodal discourse, "accompanies a considerable proportion of the duration of films" (Cohen A. J., 2001)<sup>[1]</sup>. That's why the analysis of music has become a necessary part in MDA for a better understanding of film discourse.

Any single use of theories to analyze the various modalities contained in a multimodal discourse would be inadequate and less comprehensive. To better investigate the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger in film discourse *Life of Pi*, two most commonly applied approaches currently are integrated including Halliday's (1978, 1985)<sup>[4-5]</sup> social semiotic approach and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996,2006)<sup>[7-8]</sup> contextual approach which are separately used in verbal and visual analysis,

with the addition of Cohen's (2001)<sup>[1]</sup> cognitive framework for understanding film music from emotion perspective used in audial analysis.

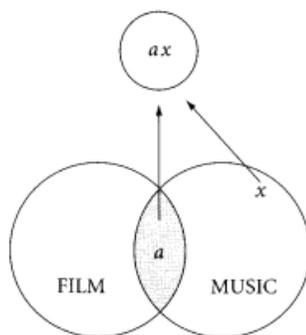
The integration benefits in both overcoming the shortages caused by the fact that each theory only works on one modality, and presenting a more comprehensive demonstration about how multi modalities work together to make meaning.

For the linguistic analysis of film *Life of Pi*, Halliday's (2004)<sup>[3]</sup> Systemic Functional Grammar is adopted. According to Halliday, language is a systemic resource for expressing meanings in context and linguistics is the study of how people exchange meanings through the use of language. Systemic-functional grammar has been proved to be quite useful in a variety of fields like discourse analysis, foreign language learning and so on so forth. Halliday mentioned some applications of systemic-functional grammar such as to understand the quality of texts, why a text means what it does and to understand how language makes sense according to its users and its functions. In the thesis, this theory is applied to analyze the linguistic text of some English transcript chosen from the film. Considering the peculiarity of this film *Life of Pi* that: 1) the tiger doesn't possess the function of speaking, hence there is only Pi's transcript; 2) the film contains large amount of Pi's voice-over, some of which could be chosen as the analyzed data; it is expected to draw a conclusion about how Pi's utterance and voice-over (which both work as the linguistic analyzed data) make a difference on the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger.

The non-linguistic analysis of film discourse *Life of Pi* deals with both visual and audial aspects. Firstly, Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996)<sup>[7]</sup> Visual Grammar would be applied in this thesis. "Language and visual forms of semiosis differ from each other in a fundamental sense" (Kay L. O'Halloran, 2008)<sup>[13]</sup>. Though Visual Grammar is developed on the basis of systemic functional grammar, it applies a different mechanism in analyzing visual images. Generally speaking, Visual Grammar allows the realization of meaning making through the analysis of visual images, making it possible to understand the images without linguistic assistance. However, for a more comprehensive understanding of *Life of Pi*, the thesis is analyzed by the interplay of both linguistic and non-linguistic aspect. In practice, this theory is applied to analyzing some selected images generated from the screen-shots to illustrate the development process of the relationship between Pi and Richard Parker. Secondly, the audial analysis in this study focuses on two sides which is the tone of Pi's utterance and the music episodes in this film.

The analysis of the tone of Pi's utterance relies on Halliday's (2004)<sup>[3]</sup> systemic functional grammar, for the reason that the key system in the interpersonal function of language possesses the analysis of tone.

The analysis of music or soundtrack in film is based on the fact that music is considered as "one of the strongest sources of emotion in film" (Cohen, 2001)<sup>[1]</sup>; thus allows audience have a more comprehensive understanding of film discourse. Figure 2.1 shows the relationship between film and music as Cohen (2001:257)<sup>[1]</sup> mentioned in the annotation of this figure that "music alters the meaning of a particular aspect of the film." Besides, as music also "sounds the way emotions feel" (Carroll C. Pratt, 1931)<sup>[14]</sup>, it is appropriate to analyze film music from the perspective of emotion. The emotion level analysis in this study rests on the cognitive framework of understanding musical soundtrack proposed by Cohen, whose focus is put on the five criteria of a genuine emotion outlined by Tan (1996)<sup>[15]</sup>, including control of procedure, law of concern, law of situational meaning, law of apparent reality, law of change and law of closure.



**Fig. 2.1 Congruence-Associationist Model Based on that Depicted by Marshall and Cohen (1988)<sup>[9]</sup>**

Under the guidance of systemic functional grammar and visual grammar, the present study attempts (1) to identify an adaptive method structure in the analysis of film discourse *Life of Pi*; (2) to investigate how multi modalities work to the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger in this film; (3) to provide a new perspective for film appreciation.

To analyze this film discourse adequately, the study is divided into linguistic analysis and non-linguistic analysis with visual and audial aspects, adopting Halliday's (2004)[3] Systemic Functional Grammar, Kress and Leeuwen's (1996, 2006)[7-8] Grammar of Visual Design, and the emotion level of analysis from A. J. Cohen's (2001)[1] cognitive framework for understanding musical soundtracks in film, respectively.

Besides, the qualitative software NVivo is also applied to processing and analyzing the data, which would be introduced specifically in the following section.

### 3. Research Procedure

The multimodal analysis of the film discourse *Life of Pi* is conducted in the following steps:

#### 3.1 Data Collecting

All the relative verbal, visual and audial data from the film discourse are collected and imported in NVivo 8 (shown in figure 3.1). Users can import different versions of materials chosen from the film into the software, such as verbal data: subtitling in Word .doc format; and visual data: images in .jpg format; as well as audio data: sound and music in .mp3 format. To be specific, nine scenes are selected from the film *Life of Pi* to offer relative semiotic resources, on the principles that both Pi and Richard the tiger were represented in the same scene which might contribute to the development of their relationship. All together the data includes transcripts, corresponded screen-shot and music episodes from nine scenes. The transcripts in the nine selected scenes with analyzed language underlined are shown as follows:

Case 1

Brother: Let's go...Before we get into trouble!

Pi: I want to see him closer.

Brother: You are not the zoo people! Come on!

Pi: (silence)

(The tiger came out)

Brother: (ran away)



Figure 3.1

### 3.2 Data Processing

In this part, the data is encoded as various nodes for the convenience of research. Since the whole study is intended to explore the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger, the data of verbal, visual and audial modalities are specified. For the verbal data, namely the subtitling, nodes are made on the utterance or voice-over of Pi when he stayed with the tiger (the tiger can't speak) in the nine selected scenes; for the visual data, certain visual images from selected scenes are screenshot when Pi and the tiger were together and coded as nodes with annotations for the convenience of research; for the audial data, the tone of Pi's utterance and music played corresponding to the above scenes are also coded with annotations to study the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger.

### 3.3 Data Analyzing

The collected data of various modalities are analyzed in this part. After collected, the verbal, visual and audial data would be categorized into separate folders; each contains materials chosen from nine scenes. The point is put in researching how the verbal, visual and audial data together make meaning and how the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger developed through the interplay of multi modalities.

### 3. 4 Concluding

At last, by analyzing the data from the nine chosen scenes of *Life of Pi* in various semiotic resources, the conclusion would be drawn on what is the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger or how their relationship develops through the film.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

As two major characters in *Life of Pi*, Pi and Richard the tiger showed up together in most part of this film. From the first time when Pi and Richard met each other to the last time when they departed without saying goodbye, altogether five scenes are selected as analyzed data to discuss the relation interplay between Pi and the tiger. These scenes are analyzed in terms of verbal, visual, audial modalities.

Of the five scenes selected above, each represents a development of the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger. As mentioned above, in most scenes, there was only Pi's monologue or voice-over, or even silence since the tiger cannot speak. To illustrate the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger, all the above scenes represented by verbal, visual and audial forms are analyzed under the guidance of systemic functional grammar, visual grammar and emotion level on a cognitive framework of understanding film music.

### 4.1 Linguistic Analysis

#### 4.1.1 The Ideational Level

The ideational function of language enables us to express patterns of experience, conceptualized as situation types, processes or states of affairs. The central part of ideational function is transitivity, voice and polarity. The transitivity structure of the sentence from the first scene is showed by Table 4.1.1.1 Syntactically, this sentence is in the active voice and in the declarative form. There are altogether two participants in this clause, which is "I" as the Senser and "him" the tiger as Phenomenon. The "want to see" part as main verb indicates the Mental process of this sentence to express the process of wanting; and "closer" stands for the spacial meaning of the circumstantial elements. Here, "want to see" as a mental process, possessing Pi's eager, as well as "closer", meaning the compressing distance, both indicate that Pi intended to build a relationship with the tiger out of his willing and curiosity.

**Tab. 4.1.1.1**

I	want to see	him	closer.
Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon	Space

It seems that young Pi determined to improve the way he got along with the tiger after the confrontation. "If we are going to live together, we have to learn to communicate." appeared as young Pi's voice-over. Then he started to train the tiger with fish just as the same way in circus. Generally, the tiger behaved itself well during the training. Pi's unflappable mood and the tiger's cooperation implied an achievement of harmony between Pi and the tiger, where Pi even playing more a part of controller in this phase. Behavioral processes are on the borderline between the physiological and psychological behaviors, which leads to the fact that behavioral processes are partly like material processes and partly like the mental. Valued from "live", "learn" and "communicate", this sentence is considered as a behavioral process, presented in Table 4.1.1.2 and table 4.1.1.3.

**Tab. 4.1.1.2**

If we	are going to live	together,
Behaver	Process: behavioral	Circumstance

**Tab. 4.1.1.3**

we	have to learn to communicate.
Behaver	Process: behavioral

In the fourth scene, both Pi and the Richard Parker suffered a lot on the ocean, dying on the edge of hunger and exhaustion. Pi touched Richard Parker when saying: "We're dying, Richard Parker." Usually, a behavioral process expresses the process of physical activities, through which it could or could not represent some psychological activities. However, the quoted sentence above can be analyzed as a mental process, since it presents a process of thinking or sensing of speaker's illusion of death. So, "we" representing Pi and Richard Parker, works as the senser as is shown in Table 4.1.1.4; whereas "dying" here is considered as a phenomenon, namely a kind of feeling and state.

When Pi said this to unconscious Richard Parker, the audience could feel the mental process of Pi that he believed they were surely to die and that he was ready for this destiny. From this process of imagining suffering death together, the relation between Pi and Richard Parker is tightened close to, between companions and companions.

**Tab. 4.1.1.4**

We're	dying, Richard Parker.
Senser	Phenomenon Pro: mental

Finally, Pi and the tiger managed to cross vast ocean and land on a beach in Mexico. The last scene where they were together, was supposed to be a perfect ending of their adventure. Unexpectedly, as adult Pi said: "And then, Richard Parker, my fierce companion, the terrible one who kept me alive, disappeared forever from my life." This sentence possesses a material process, in which the actor Richard Parker appeared in three different forms of address. Then, in the last part of adult Pi's monologue, he seemed to speak directly to Richard Parker: "It's over, we survived...thank you for saving my life. I love you, Richard Parker. You'll always be with me. But I can't be with you", leaving audience a strong feeling about the close relationship between Pi and Richard Parker. As is shown in Table 4.1.1.6, it is apparently a mental process, expressing the relationship between Pi and Richard Parker has sublimated to a rather intimate extent.

**Tab. 4.1.1.5**

And then, Richard Parker, my fierce companion, the terrible one who kept me alive,	disappeared	forever from my life.
Actor	Pro:material	Range

**Tab. 4.1.1.6**

I	love	you, Richard Parker.
Senser	Pro: mental	Phenomenon

4.1.2 The Interpersonal Level

The interpersonal structure of Scene 1 is demonstrated by Table 4.1.2.1. What Pi said “I want to see him closer.” is actually taken as a rejection to his brother’s proposal for leave. This is a whole declarative sentence with “I” as the subject, and “want to see” as the predicate which indicates the mental process of the subject. The address of the tiger in this scene is “him”, which on one hand out of the fact that Pi was talking to his brother when referred the tiger; on the other hand indicating the not-built relationship with the tiger.

**Tab. 4.1.2.1**

I	want to see	him	closer.
Subject	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct(Circ.)
Mood	Residue		
Mood Structure			
Interpersonal Structure			

Pi started to think about the effective way to get along with the tiger. In the third scene, Pi came up with an idea to train the tiger so that they could live together harmoniously. His voice-over came up as “If we are going to live together, we have to learn to communicate.” This sentence includes two clauses. From this scene, Pi changed the way to address the tiger; instead of “you” or “mine”, this is the first time that Pi used “we”, which indicates that their relationship changed from oppose to cooperate in Pi’s mind. Demonstrated by the second clause “we have to learn to communicate” in Table 4.1.2.2, it is a command with modulation “have to” shown as obligation. Here “have to” stands for the high degree of modality, meaning “required”. In fact, these two clauses were delivered to the audience through Pi’s voice-over, expressing what he was thinking at that moment. When he “said”: “have to”, he actually meant “I believe we have to”, which exposes Pi’s implicit subjectivity in his relationship with the tiger. That is to say, in terms of the relationship between Pi and the tiger, Pi was the controller. So the high degree of modality “have to” suggests that Pi forced himself to get along with the tiger in spite of his unwillingness.

**Tab. 4.1.2.2**

we	have to	learn	to communicate.
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
Mood Structure		Residue	

In the fourth scene, Pi said to the tiger “We’re dying, Richard Parker. I’m sorry.” This was the first time he called the tiger by its name during their adventure, suggesting that he began to treat the tiger as his accompany and companion. At this very moment when people know they will die, they usually don’t lie. So then Pi said “I’m sorry” to Richard Parker, he meant it. Pi felt sorry for Richard Parker, and this sense of guilty increasingly contributes to the development of their relationship as two partners who had suffered together.

The last scene led to the departure of Pi and Richard Parker. Large amount of adult Pi’s voice appeared in this period, dragging the audience back to real life. In this part, adult Pi summarized his relationship with Richard Parker. In Table 4.1.2.3, Pi addressed the tiger as “Richard Parker”, “my fierce companion” and “the terrible one who kept me alive”, revealing that he saw the tiger equally and that he was once afraid of the tiger but yet thankful for its accompany with whom he got over the toughest moment in his life.

**Tab. 4.1.2.3**

And then,	Richard Parker, my fierce companion, the terrible one who kept me alive,	disappeared	forever	from my life.
Adjunct(Con.)	Subject	Finite(past) Predicator	Mood Adjunct	Complement
Residue	Mood Structure		Residue	

#### 4.1.3 The Textual Level

Both the thematic structure and the information structure of sentences in Scene One are illustrated. As Table 4.1.3.1 shows, the thematic structure is quite clear with the subject as theme and the residue as rheme.

However, the information structure consists of two changes from given information to new information. In this case, the speaker brings news that the hearer does not know for twice. And according to the interpersonal analysis of this clause, the tonic prominence is put on “closer”, which makes the word “closer” be the information focus or the culmination of the new information. Putting information focus on “closer” means that Pi the speaker wanted to see the tiger in a nearer place thus to build a relationship with the tiger. The new information behind the two known information also highlights Pi’s will to see the tiger.

**Tab. 4.1.3.1**

I	want to see	him	closer.
Theme	Rheme		
Given	—————New—————>	Given	—————New—————>

In scene 6, Pi expressed his thoughts by his voice-over “If we are going to live together, we have to learn to communicate.” The whole clause “If we are going to live together” works as the clausal theme, where “If we” is the theme of this clause and the rest as the rheme in Table 4.1.3.2. What’s more, “if” acts as the structural element in the secondary theme and “we” as the topical element. That is to say, “we” are the meaning center of this sentence and what Pi really wanted to talk about. For the first time Pi address him and the tiger as a unity team “we”, implying a transition of the relationship between them. According to the cohesion analysis, the clause is expressed by conjunction. “If” works as a transitional word to express conditional relations and suggests to the audience that “the condition that he can get along with the tiger peacefully is to communicate with each other”. This marks a great change between their relationship since Pi started to cast about how to accept the tiger as a “life partner”.

**Tab. 4.1.3.2**

If we are going to live together,	we have to learn to communicate.
structural	topical
Theme	Rheme
Given	New —————>
Given	New —————>

Scene 7 illustrated the situation where Pi and the tiger after struggling for life were exhausted and dying. When he said “we’re dying, Richard Parker” to the tiger in his arms, it’s the first time he addressed directly the tiger for its name. The given information “we” works as the theme of this clause, “dying” and “Richard Parker” is new information while “Richard Parker” is the information focus. Instead of “him” or “you”, Pi addressed the tiger like a friend, indicating a change of their relation. When he said “I’m sorry”, there was an ellipsis of what he was sorry about. This cohesion device used here both emphasized Pi’s feeling of “sorry” and left some imaginal space to the audience.

**Tab. 4.1.3.3**

We're dying,		Richard Parker.
Theme	Rheme	
Given		————— New —————▶

At last, when it came to the departure scene, adult Pi voice-over appeared: “And then, Richard Parker, my fierce companion, the terrible one who kept me alive, disappeared forever from my life.” in Table 4.1.3.4. Here, the theme contains three different address terms for the tiger, suggesting Pi’s impression on the tiger. “And then” referred to when “after the tiger stepping into the jungle”, used as a substitute which makes the text compact and influent. Theme means what the speaker wants to focus on, so in this clause, adult Pi expressed how he viewed the tiger from the beginning to the end, indicating a closure of their relationship and also of the story.

**Tab. 4.1.3.4**

And then, Richard Parker, my fierce companion, the terrible one who kept me alive,	disappeared forever from my life.
Theme	Rheme
Given	New

## 4.2 Visual Analysis

To uncover the relationship between Pi and the tiger, visual grammar is applied to analyzing some images appearing in five scenes in terms of representational meaning, interactional meaning and compositional meaning which were developed on the basis of Systemic Functional Grammar's three metafunctions.

### 4.2.1 The Representational Level

For the representational meaning of visual elements, Kress and van Leeuwen identify two processes as carrying representational meanings in images: conceptual processes explain what things are like and have a didactic function; presentational processes deal with actions and events and so function as a narrative, distinguished by the fact that whether there is vector or not. Besides, Kress and Leeuwen stated "...narrative patterns serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements." From all these above, it can be concluded that the three pictures which were randomly chosen as screen-shot from the first scene all represent narrative processes. Vectors in these three pictures are judged by the way that they are "formed by depicted elements that form an oblique line, often a quite strong, diagonal line." (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996: 57)<sup>[7]</sup>

The objects or elements appeared in a visual image are identified as "Participants" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996:46)<sup>[7]</sup>. All the three pictures (figure 4.2.1.1; 4.2.1.2; 4.2.1.3) involve two Participants--- Pi and the tiger and show a process of the tiger moving slowly towards Pi. In the first picture, Pi's brother also appeared as a participant while he and Pi were both staring at the tiger and vice versa, in which case the three of them played the role of Actor and the role of Goal to form a bidirectional transactional structure. The vector is formed by the direction of Pi's leg and his glance at the tiger. The whole can be transcoded as "Pi and his brother see the tiger coming closer." It is noticeable that Pi's brother is gone in the second picture, leaving Pi and the tiger alone, where the vector starts from the tiger side. Yet the angle changes again to the Pi side in the third picture. Here, the vector is realized by the direction of Pi's leg and arm as well as his glance. The tiger comes closer in distance. Pi, however, instead of running away as his brother did, stretching his arm to the tiger. They closed stared at each other indicating their curiosity about each other and eagerness to build up a relationship.

The whole set of pictures can thus be transcoded as what the transcript showed “I want to see him closer” and what the transcript didn’t tell the audience, that is the tiger’s eager to “come closer to Pi”. This set of pictures illustrates a beginning of the relationship between Pi and the tiger.



**Fig. 4.2.1.1**



**Fig. 4.2.1.2**



**Fig. 4.2.1.3**



**Fig. 4.2.1.4**

Though there was no transcript in the second scene, the audience still could understand the meaning through the visual elements as illustrated in figure 4.2.1.5. It was the first morning for Pi and the tiger spending together in the little boat after the ship-wrecking accident. The tiger came out from the white cover and tried to attack Pi. In this narrative pattern, vector is formed by Pi's curling legs and his eyeline toward somewhere outside the picture frame while the tiger held its paws to Pi and its eyeline toward the opposite direction to Pi---outside the picture frame too. "When the vector is formed by an eyeline, by the direction of the glance of one or more of the represented participants, the process is reactional." (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996:64) <sup>[7]</sup>. Therefore, it can be concluded that this reactional process in this picture is non-transactional. What Pi and the tiger saw is unclear to the audience, yet it could be analyzed that Pi gazed into the middle distance and seemed terrified; while the tiger had its eyes on far horizons and left the viewer to imagine what the tiger was looking at, which could create a powerful sense of identification. The eyesight pattern of Pi and the tiger is usually embodied in separately women and men. Therefore, this picture could be transcoded as "Pi was terrified by the tiger and the tiger was dominator in its relationship with Pi."



**Fig. 4.2.1.5**

In the third scene, two pictures were screen-shot after Pi's voice-over went "If we are going to live together, we have to learn to communicate." Then the viewer can understand the pictures clearly, and figure out the way by which Pi tried to communicate with the tiger was to train it.

Judged by the yellow fish bag tied around Pi's waist and the long stick in his hands, Pi trained the tiger as what people did to the animals in a circus. The participants in such structures are referred to as Interactors, indicating Pi and tiger's double role of Actor and Goal. In contrast with sitting straight in figure 4.2.1.6, the tiger started to move toward Pi in this scene, which shows interaction or communication between them. In figure 4.2.1.7, the whole angle of Pi's body forms a vector between the two represented participants. They were close in distance and the tiger opened its mouth, but Pi didn't show the sign of retreat judged by his gesture and fist. All these indicate Pi's willing and determination to communicate with the tiger and live with it peacefully.



**Fig. 4.2.1.6**



**Fig. 4.2.1.7**

It was the first time when Pi touched the tiger as is shown in figure 4.2.1.8. The tiger lost consciousness out of hunger and tiredness and lied down on the board. Pi moved towards the tiger and squatted on the board, putting his hand on the head of the tiger. In this transactional relational process, the laying tiger is Actor which becomes the Phenomenon of Pi's pitying gaze and touch. Figure 4.2.1.9 and 4.2.1.10 separately shows the tiger and Pi's faces. In figure 4.2.1.10, the vector is formed by the eyeline of Pi when he was looking at something (the tiger) outside the picture frame, but what he was looking at the audience can't see. It left to the audience to think about what Pi was looking at, which creates a powerful sense of empathy. Pi's eyeline came from higher place and ended in somewhere low, indicating his higher position in the relationship with tiger. Yet his sorrowful and pitying facial expression as long as the transcript "We're dying, Richard Parker" both show that he was quite desperate and felt sorry for the tiger. The relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger experienced a big turn in this scene.



Fig. 4.2.1.8



Fig. 4.2.1.9

Fig. 4.2.1.10

In the last scene, Pi and Richard Parker finally ended their adventure and landed. It came to the departure of them. In figure 4.2.1.11 and 4.2.1.14, only Pi appeared in the frame. His eyes stared somewhere outside the picture frame, arousing wonder from the audience about what he was staring at. Based on the context, the audience could understand that he was looking at the tiger and the change of his facial expression reflected his emotions towards Richard Parker. This pattern creates a powerful sense of empathy and identification with the represented participant (Pi), which makes the audience understand Pi's feelings well. As Richard Parker left farther and farther (figure 4.2.1.12 & 4.2.1.13), Pi's facial expression changed (figure 4.2.1.11 & 4.2.1.14). It could be concluded that Pi was unwilling to depart from the tiger.

**Fig. 4.2.1.11****Fig. 4.2.1.12****Fig. 4.2.1.13****Fig. 4.2.1.14**

#### 4.2.2 The Interactional Level

According to Kress and Leeuwen, interactional meaning of visual images is identified through the representation of relations between viewer and image, which is integrated by aspects like contact, social distance, attitude, color and modality. In this part, screen-shots from five selected scenes would be analyzed by these aspects to conclude the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger.

Contact is not established in figure 4.2.1.1, 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.1.3. It means there is no connection between the represented participants (Pi and the tiger) and the audience, which makes these three images “offer”—it “offers” the represented participants to the audience as items of information and objects of contemplation. The audience viewed the film as a onlooker and felt out of this scene. In figure 4.2.1.4, the tiger looked directly at the audience, to make this image a “demanding” for the connection with the audience, which makes the audience feel right in front of the tiger and enhances the frightened atmosphere.

Instead of running away from the tiger, Pi held out his hand with meat to feed the tiger, in an inviting gesture, thus also demanding a friendly relation with the tiger. The contrast between the fear among the audience and Pi's hand help understand that Pi was curious about the tiger and willing to build up a relationship with the tiger. The size of frame of figure 4.2.1.2, 4.2.1.3 and 4.2.1.4 changes from long shot to medium shot then to close-up, gradually zooming in the distance between the represented participants and the audience, which makes the audience experience the nervous atmosphere vividly. Moreover, the dark grey color creates a mysterious, unknown and heavy atmosphere, indicating a bad beginning of the relationship between Pi and the tiger.

Figure 4.2.1.5 is an image of "offer" since there is no eye contact between the represented participants (Pi and the tiger) and the audience. Therefore, the audience could take the information represented by the image as an invisible onlooker to view what happened between Pi and the tiger indirectly. The medium shot represent social distance where Pi curled his body toward the audience and Pi stretched its paws to the direction of the audience, too. This could arouse the desire to protect Pi as well as to escape from the tiger among the audience. The enormous black color sea contrasted strongly with the piece of white cloth on the boat, indicating that Pi had nowhere to hide on the ocean and he was quite unwilling to be with the tiger.

In figure 4.2.1.6 and 4.2.1.7, the audience turns back to the position of invisible onlooker. Figure 4.2.1.6 is a long distance shot, which represents far social distance. It offers the audience what happened between Pi and the tiger at that moment and gives a sense of control about the development of the movie. The medium shot in figure 4.2.1.7 pulls the audience closer to the representative participants. The angle is taken from the back of Pi, which makes the audience stand on Pi's side and feel like training the tiger together with Pi. The color of the whole scene becomes brighter than ever, which might show a better and more steady relationship between Pi and the tiger, compared with the relatively dark scene in the previous scenes.

Figure 4.2.1.8 serves as an image of "offering" the information that for the first time Pi touched the tiger in a coma. Pi and the tiger are framed at a close social distance through a medium shot.

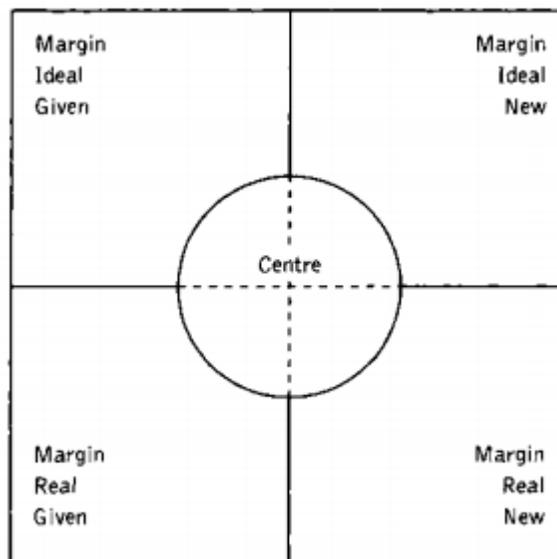
The distance between the audience and the representative participants represents varying degrees of familiarity, thus reinforcing the meaning that Pi and the tiger were connected (bodily) then to mark a change of relationship between them and acknowledges that concerns for Pi and the tiger are familiar. A close-up of Pi in figure 4.2.1.10 denotes intimate distance with the audience, which helps audience understand Pi's temporal feelings distinctly and clearly. Though Pi is the only participant in this image, he didn't look directly at the audience. Instead, he was looking at somewhere (the tiger on his legs) outside the frame. Looking at Pi as an invisible onlooker even arouses a deeper and stronger realization among the audience that Pi was sad and sorry about dying Richard Parker, judged by his facial expression. Alongside with Pi's words "We're dying, Richard Parker. I'm sorry", the audience could understand the scene easily. In these three images of scene 7, the color of environment turns back to dark, which indicates the plight where Pi and the tiger reached. Pi's white and clean pants of turns yellow and dirty, while Richard Parker's black and wet nose becomes spotty and dry. Both of them indicate that Pi and Richard Parker had suffered a lot during the adventure. At the most miserable moment of their adventure, Pi and Richard Parker (who had lost its consciousness) finally achieved harmony in their relationship.

In the last scene, the tiger went further and further till it disappeared in the forest as illustrate in figure 4.2.1.12 and 4.2.1.13. The frame changes from long shot to very long shot, illustrating the departure of the tiger vividly. Figure 4.2.1.11 and 4.2.1.14 shows Pi's facial expression separately at the beginning and ending of the tiger's departure. These two images are both represented in close personal distance through close-up, which could make the audience produce a real and profound empathy for Pi's feeling and emotion about the departure of Richard Parker. From the expressions in Pi's eyes in figure 4.2.1.11 and the transcript, the audience could feel his longing to see the tiger, which forms a strong comparison with his sad facial expression as is shown in figure 4.2.1.14 after Richard Parker disappeared in the forest without looking back. Pi was saved which could be a happy ending to his suffering on the ocean. Yet he crying like a child enhances the impression among the audience that Pi was unwilling to depart from the tiger.

#### 4.2.3 The Compositional Level

The compositional meaning of images is composed of information value, framing and salience.

Information value is the specific informational values attached to the various “zones” of a visual image, endowed by its placement, that is left and right, representing Given and New information; top and bottom, representing Ideal and Real information; Centre and Margin, representing nucleus and subservient information. Dividing visual images according to these dimensions can be seen in figure 4.2.3.1 as follows. Framing concerns that the presence or absence of framing devices connects or disconnects elements of the image, signifying whether they belong together or not in some sense. Saliency refers to the placement of elements in a image according to thing as size, focus, color and distance. Elements in a image generally become heavier when positioned towards the top or left of an image.



**Fig. 4.2.3.1 The dimensions of visual space (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996:208)<sup>[7]</sup>**

In figure 4.2.1.1, Pi is the Centre, who is presented as the nucleus of the information on which all the other elements (Pi’s brother and the tiger) are to some extent subservient. Audience put their first sight on Pi, then moving to his brother on the left in the Given, at last noticing the appearance of the tiger. The tiger is placed in the space of the New, attracting the attention of audience. Pi’s Centre placement makes sure that the other elements and their actions are all based on Pi’s point of view, which gives audience a first impression of Pi’s dominant role in the beginning of his relationship with the tiger.

However, the most salient feature in this figure is Pi's brother, given his size, which actually contrasts strongly with figure 4.2.1.3 where Pi's brother has gone. This kind of strong contrast on one hand implies how terrified the tiger is, on the other hand highlights how eager Pi is to build up a relationship with the tiger. Though figure 4.2.1.2 is a shot from the side of the tiger, Pi is still placed as the Centre, reinforcing his dominant status and key role. Now, the tiger becomes the salient feature and the Real, indicating the tiger is gradually becoming the real creature in Pi's life. In figure 4.2.1.3, the tiger comes closer while Pi still works as the Centre. The face of the tiger is hidden in shadow, which may generate some mysterious atmosphere, arousing the curiosity of both Pi and the audience. The whole process as illustrated in figure 4.2.1.1, 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.1.3 when the tiger comes from the Ideal to the Real represents a building process of the relationship between Pi and the tiger. In figure 4.2.1.4, audience would be attracted by the face of the tiger which is the Centre here before noticing Pi's hand with meat below. The face of the tiger is half seen clearly while the other half in the shadow, indicating its veil has been half uncovered, yet the other half left unknown to Pi, which also leaves imagination to the audience. So far, the appearance of the tiger has aroused both Pi's and the audience's curiosity about what would the tiger be like, leading to the following part of the movie.

Placing Pi at the centre of figure 4.2.1.5 suggests that Pi is the key information of this image, not only his gesture and facial expression, but also his feelings and attitude. The tiger is placed on the top as the Ideal, indicating its distance with the audience. Unlike the half covered figure in the last scene, the tiger's image is clear in figure 4.2.1.5, revealing the tiger's real nature. Besides, the dead zebra put on the top of the tiger reinforces the horrible image of the tiger. From the curling body and terrified face of Pi, the audience could conclude that Pi is extremely frightened by the tiger. The color of Pi's shirt and pants collocates with that of the sea and the boat, indicating the long and endless adventure on the ocean. This could deepen the desperation of Pi, representing a bad beginning of the relationship between Pi and the tiger.

As expected, Pi decided to "communicate" with the tiger by trying to train it. In figure 4.2.1.6, Pi and the tiger stand on each end of the boat. With a slight notice, Pi is placed closer to the Centre, which suggests that Pi is making efforts to make contact with tiger. The tiger, though not as near as Pi is, can be judged on its way of moving too. The white pants together with the white cloth of the boat form a strong comparison of the orange board on the tiger's side and its body color.

This comparison of color might represent a competition over leadership. Figure 4.2.1.7 put Pi right the Centre, making him the key information of this image. Though his face is not seen, his determination to train the tiger can be told from his gesture. His body covers most of the orange board area of the tiger, indicating that Pi is about to conquer the tiger. The tiger as the New in this image represents the tiger's reaction about Pi's training. In this figure, the tiger's face looks fierce but its body doesn't move at all, which on the other side proves that Pi is taking control in his relationship with the tiger.

In figure 4.2.1.8, Pi's hand is put on the head of the unconscious tiger. For the first time when Pi really connects with the tiger physically, the Centre is the point where Pi and the tiger touched. The audience would notice the connection firstly, then moving to Pi and the tiger. Here, the tiger is the New, who appeared dying and poor, together with Pi's pity look on his face, arousing the sympathy on the tiger. Pi's not so white pants blend in the less orange board with the tiger lying on it, which might response to the connection with Pi and the tiger, to reflect a change of their relationship. With Pi's hand putting on head of the tiger as the Centre as is shown in figure 4.2.1.9, the audience could feel Pi's acceptance of the tiger. In figure 4.2.1.10, Pi's whole facial expression is the Centre, where the audience is expected to feel Pi's pitiful and sad mood about Richard Parker's death intensively. Unlike the curious, frightened or resistant look on Pi's face, his sympathetic expression suggests his changed attitude toward the tiger, meanwhile indicating a great change of their relationship as well.

In figure 4.2.1.11, audience put his attention on Pi's eyes –the Centre of the image. It could be told from Pi's eyeline that he really concerns where Richard Parker would go. This concerned look is compared strongly with the sad crying face in figure 4.2.1.14 where Richard Parker has gone. This kind facial expression change indicates a great change of Pi's emotions about Richard Parker. The view of Richard Parker's back as the Centre in figure 4.2.1.12 sends audience the signal that Richard Parker is leaving. However, the Centre in figure 4.2.1.13 is not Richard Parker, but a black hole in the forest, which suggests the unknown of Richard Parker's destination or its disappearance forever. During the departure of Pi and Richard Parker, there is just the face of Pi and the back of the tiger, implying that the tiger may not have the empathy with Pi, therefore, Pi's emotions and attitudes towards the tiger seems the key point influencing his relationship with the tiger.

### 4.3 Audial Analysis

Audial resource is also a necessary part in a film discourse. The audial analysis of film discourse *Life of Pi* lies in two aspects, the first one is tone of Pi's utterances and the second one is music in the film as follows:

#### 4.3.1 Tone

To analyze the tone of Pi's utterances in the five scenes, Halliday's systemic functional grammar is adopted for the tone groups classifications derived from the interpersonal function of language.

As for the key and tone of the sentence from scene 1, it can be seen from the spoken utterance of Pi that the emphasis is put on "closer", as "//I want to /see him/closer//". According to Halliday, the tone of "closer" belongs to the fourth kind of ascending at first and then falling, which implies Pi's affirmation that he wanted to watch the tiger carefully and indicates his will to build up a relationship with the tiger.

"We're dying" in scene 4 is said in Tone 1—falling tone, showing that Pi believed they would die for sure and he was ready to accept the fact. It shows Pi's desperation at that moment. However, it is Pi's reaction to Richard Parker at the moment he believed he would be dead for sure, that reflected the fact he saw Richard Parker as a close friend and real company in this scene. This signifies a development of relationship between Pi and Richard Parker.

In the last scene, "//And then, / Richard Parker, /my fierce companion, /the terrible one who kept me alive, /disappeared /forever /from my life.//", containing Tone 5(rising-falling), means "seems uncertain, but turns out to be certain". This tone expresses a strong and certain emotion. The emphasis was put on "forever", a mood adjunct to express time, implying adult Pi's regret for ending the relationship with Richard Parker.

#### 4.3.2 Music in the Film

Among the five scenes selected from the film *Life of Pi*, there are altogether five ones accompanied with music episodes.

In this part, the relationship between Pi and the tiger can be analyzed through the emotion level analysis adopted from the cognitive framework for understanding film music proposed by Cohen (2001).<sup>[1]</sup>

In the first scene, the soundtrack starts right after Pi's brother run away when there were just Pi and the tiger left. The soundtrack turns from low-pitch and low-volume to higher one with the tiger stepping closer and closer to Pi, achieving its highest point when the tiger smelt the meat in Pi's hand. This change corresponding to the control procedure of emotion law indicates that the audience's emotion is controlled by this soundtrack when watching this scene. Though there are no verbal elements in this procedure, the audience could still feel the nervousness of Pi when the tiger approached and the unknown character of the tiger.

Three types of music appeared in the third scene. On the former part when Pi decided to train the tiger and prepared for this decision, the soundtrack is aggressive and inspirational. When Pi got closer and closer to the tiger, the volume of soundtrack in this part turned larger, arousing a nervous emotion among the audience. The last part when Pi finally managed to train the tiger, soundtrack returns as relax and then bright. This change in soundtrack indicates the change of emotion law. From the determination to train the tiger, to the dangerous process then the triumph in the end, Pi's emotion was expressed by the change of music too. Audience could understand this kind of change in Pi's mind clearly through the soundtrack in this part.

In the fourth scene, two episodes appeared. When Pi was approaching the unconscious tiger, the soundtrack is like the one in the first scene, indicating a process of approaching something unknown. But when the moment Pi touched the head of the tiger with his hands, the music episode turns sad and low-pitched. Music here controls the emotion response of the audience, making a change from unknown to pitiful emotion. The soundtrack in this scene together with images and Pi's utterances, clearly demonstrate Pi's attitude toward Richard Parker at that moment.

A piece of soothing music accompanied throughout the last scene. Though Pi didn't want the tiger to leave without saying goodbye, it happened still; just like the still and steady music displayed in this scene.

The emotion law of closure indicates that neither Pi nor the audience was able to change the departure of Richard Parker, setting a sad departure atmosphere for this scene.

#### 4. Conclusion

Under the guidance of the theoretical framework rooted in systemic-functional grammar, visual grammar and the laws of emotion for understand musical soundtrack, the thesis employs a multimodal discourse analysis to explore the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger in film *Life of Pi*. Based on the results and discussion, the following conclusions are drawn:

Firstly, an adaptive method structure is found in the film *Life of Pi*. The combination of linguistic and non-linguistic analysis in terms of systemic-functional grammar, visual grammar and laws of emotion for understanding music may offer the audience a comprehensive appreciation of the film.

Secondly, linguistic analysis of transcripts from the five chosen scenes can contribute to understanding the meaning of Pi's utterance; visual analysis of screen shots enhances the effects of linguistic meaning while audial analysis reinforces the audience's mood, which tend to help the audience can understand the relationship between Pi and the tiger comprehensively. All the analysis on these three levels leads to the fact that Pi's attitude influences his relationship with the tiger that has been the passive one throughout the adventure. Pi's attitude changes as curious —frightened— resistant— acceptable—close—inseparable— unwilling to part in the end, directly determining his relationship with the tiger.

Finally, comprehensive analysis of film discourse *Life of Pi* in term of verbal, visual and audial level, makes the relationship between Pi and Richard the tiger more apprehensible. Since the relationship between Pi and the tiger is key to understand the film, we also generate a better understanding of *Life of Pi* through this study.

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