

The Happiest Place on Earth: A Spatial Discourse Analysis of Disney's Epcot World Showcase

O Lugar Mais Feliz da Terra: Uma Análise do Discurso Espacial do Epcot World Showcase da Disney World

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Abstract

Drawing on insights from a social semiotic perspective as proposed by Halliday (1985), and its adaptation to the grammar of visual design (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006), and spatial discourse analysis (RAVELLI, 2000, RAVELLI; HEBERLE, 2016), this article aims to analyze semiotic resources used in EPCOT's World Showcase, Disney World, Florida, USA, specifically, the eleven thematic pavilions in the attraction. The analysis considered the three metafunctions, adapted from Halliday (1985) to investigate images (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006) as well as physical spaces (RAVELLI, 2000). Results show that the representation relies mainly on the reproduction of semiotic resources that are popular in each country in the Showcase, such as monuments, architectural styles and symbols that enable the guests to immerse in the country's culture. The immersion also happens through the consumption in shops with local products and restaurants with local foods, as well as the interaction with local cast members. The composition analysis showed a common pattern regarding the placement of items that are more approachable and real in the lower part, while items that symbolize idealization and fantasy are usually placed in the upper part of the spaces. Overall, despite the concern to portray the countries with authenticity, it can be seen that they are represented in an idealistic and fanciful way which follows the ideology of Disney's theme parks of providing an environment of perfection and fantasy to the guests.

Keywords

Spatial Discourse Analysis; Disney World Showcase; Multimodality.

Resumo


A partir de insights da perspectiva sociosemiótica conforme proposta por Halliday (1985), e sua adaptação para a gramática do design visual de Kress e van Leeuwen (2006) e da análise do discurso espacial (RAVELLI, 2000, RAVELLI; HEBERLE, 2016), este artigo visa analisar os recursos semióticos usados na atração The World Showcase, do parque temático EPCOT, na Flórida, especificamente, os onze pavilhões da atração. A análise considerou as três metafunções, adaptadas de Halli-

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day (1985) para se investigar imagens (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006) e também espaços físicos, entendidos como textos, conforme Ravelli (2000): os significados representacionais, interativos e composicionais. Os resultados demonstram que a representação se dá principalmente pela reprodução de recursos semióticos que são populares em cada país retratado, tais como monumentos, estilo arquitetônico e símbolos que permitem aos visitantes imergir na cultura do país. A imersão também ocorre através do consumo de produtos em lojas e em restaurantes com comidas locais, além da interação com os funcionários do parque. A análise da composição evidenciou um padrão comum em relação à localização de itens que são mais acessíveis e reais na parte inferior, enquanto itens que simbolizam idealização e fantasia ocupam normalmente a parte superior dos espaços. Em termos gerais, apesar da preocupação em retratar os países com autenticidade, pode-se observar que eles são representados de uma maneira idealizada e fantasiosa, em consonância com a filosofia dos parques temáticos da Disney em prover um espaço de perfeição e fantasia para os visitantes.

Palavras-chave

Análise do Discurso Espacial; Disney World Showcase; Multimodalidade.

Introduction

With the advancement of studies in multimodality, discourse analysts are able to provide new analytical frameworks to enable a critical perspective through several modes of meaning-making. The grammar of visual design (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006) is a critical analytical framework inspired by and adapted from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics to investigate the meaning of visual images. Accordingly, also inspired by Halliday's social semiotic theory, spatial discourse analysis, developed initially to analyze museums (RAVELLI, 2006), has been expanding its 'grammar' in order to provide a multimodal framework to critically investigate physical spaces as social semiotic elements (MCMURTRIE; RAVELLI, 2015). The analytical framework has become part of the interdisciplinary area of Multimodality, providing new possibilities to understand semiotic objects and to investigate meaning through a critical perspective.

The present study aims to analyze the World Showcase, a space at the Disney World in Orlando, Florida, USA, which represents different countries in one of the most popular thematic parks in the world. It draws on multimodality as a transdisciplinary social semiotic approach to communication (KRESS, 2010), based on Halliday's social semiotics "concerned with the meaning-making potential, use, and development of different semiotic resources" (DJONOV; ZHAO, 2018, p. 3), with the support of the analytical framework provided by spatial discourse analysis. More specifically, the study aims to investigate the three meta-functions of meaning: representational, interactive and compositional meanings of the physical space of the park. The choice to analyze the World Showcase lies in the fact that this area in Epcot Center has eleven pavilions, each themed and dedicated to represent a specific country. Therefore, in matters of representation, the study will explore how these nations and countries are represented. More-

over, even though Epcot is one of the most popular tourist attractions worldwide, there are no studies investigating the representations of the World Showcase within the critical and analytical background of spatial discourse analysis.

Firstly, the study contextualizes the object of study as theme parks, Disney World and the World Showcase, and also presents an overview of the theories and analytical frameworks which have served as the basis for the study. Then, the analysis and discussion are carried out with the focus on the three metafunctions of meaning. Furthermore, as the object of study is a major attraction for tourists, the study will also investigate the correlation of the analysis of the meanings and its contribution to guests' enjoyable experience in the World Showcase. The questions addressed in this article are as follows: (1) What semiotic resources are used to represent the eleven countries? and (2) What do the representational, interactional and compositional meanings reveal about the guests' experience?

1. Theme Parks, Disney World and Epcot's World Showcase

The main objective of theme parks is to create an atmosphere of fantasy in another place or time for the guests (MILMAN, 2008). Modern theme parks, like the ones in Disney World in Orlando, tend to have a focus on providing an excellent service for the guests in almost all of the parks' operation. In addition to its architecture style, the rides, shows, food courts, merchandising and other services contribute to the immersion of the guest in a world of fantasy (MILMAN, 2008). The opening of Disneyland, the first Disney theme park ever created (in California in 1955) was a turning point in the amusement business. Disneyland presented quality, safety, cleanliness and security in a way that differed from what other amusement parks offered at the time.

Milman (2008) states that since 1980 the theme park industry has become larger, offering a variety of parks with different entertainment options, as well as smaller theme parks with specific segments such as Legoland in California, USA¹. Even though several theme parks have successfully been developed, Disney's theme parks remain the most outstanding ones, regarding attendance and relevance. According to the TEA/AECOM 2016 Global Attractions Attendance Report², only three of the top ten largest amusement parks in the world regarding annual attendance are not Disney's. One of the reasons Disney's parks remain

1 In Penha, SC, Brazil, for instance, there is the largest theme park in South America, called *Beto Carrero World*, founded by João Batista Sérgio Murad. <https://www.betocarrero.com.br/>

2 Available at http://www.teaconnect.org/images/files/TEA_235_103719_170601.pdf

successful throughout the years might rely on the previous success of Disney as a film studio. Moreover, Disney's parks were all developed with an intrinsic sense of creating pleasant narratives and providing physical spaces that would allow the guests to experience the concepts of fantasy in the real world³. Accordingly, Milman (2008, p. 218) points out that the "successful development of a themed attraction is a combination of writing or storytelling, creative design, financial projections, audience analysis and planning".

Disneyland in California was developed mainly to offer a place where parents and children could enjoy the experience together, instead of a park that could be attractive and interesting only for children (BECK, 2014). However, its physical location was not enough to develop all of Walt Disney's ideas for a park. The opening of Disney World in Florida enabled Walt Disney to give life to his plans and many other projects for a park, since the location was huge, providing the expansion of his ideas (BECK, 2014). In 1978, Walt Disney company opened the theme park in Walt Disney World: Epcot. Nowadays, Epcot is divided in two spatial lands: The Future World and The World Showcase. While the Future World celebrates technology and innovation, the World Showcase celebrates the different cultures around the world (BECK, 2014).

According to the TEA/AECOM 2016 Global Attractions Attendance Report, more than eleven million people visit Epcot every year, making it the third most visited theme park in the United States and the sixth in the world. The World Showcase, which is the object of this study, represents different countries divided in eleven pavilions: *United States of America, Mexico, Norway, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Morocco, France, United Kingdom*⁴ and *Canada*. The pavilions are situated around a large man-made lake named *The World Showcase Lagoon*, and guests can visit them one by one and enjoy the various entertainment options that each of the pavilions offer. As explained in the official website⁵, "there are several movies, boat rides and shows that will give you an overview of the country you're in".

Although studies about the World Showcase have already been conduct-

3 Disneyland's importance was also marked by the event that occurred there with President George Bush's salute to the American Olympic athletes who were going to Seoul in 1988. According to Wernick (1991, p. 147-151), the event was considered a "pseudo-event", an "ideological theatre". Disneyland meant a land of optimism, with no national or international problems involved. Still according to Wernick (1991) George Bush's staged Disneyland appearance emphasized "a multiple promotional role", "a triple equivalence of essences": Bush, Disneyland and the American Olympics team.

4 To facilitate the description process in our study, we have considered The United Kingdom a country.

5 <https://www.wdwinform.com/wdwinform/guides/epcot/ep-worldshowcase.htm>

ed, they are not analyzed under a social semiotic perspective. Milman (2013)'s quantitative research, for instance, which analyzes the guests' perception of staged authenticity in the World Showcase, indicates that the pavilions are perceived to be "truthful", the architecture to be "realistic" and the ethnic food to be "authentic". Authenticity in Disney parks is a controversial topic that has been widely discussed. Holtorf (2010) points out that Disney theme parks reflect the guest expectations of the past and the historical representations are based on stereotypes; however, it is still a valid experience. The author claims that:

Such places will not challenge visitors with elements of history that do not seem to fit their expectations; visitors will not be prompted to rethink their own assumptions and indeed confront their prejudices. At the same time, Disney's placemaking allows visitors to encounter and experience a rendition of this very time period for themselves in the sense that it represents the past (HOLTORF, 2010, p. 31).

Shepard (2016)'s study about the representation of Mexico in the World Showcase also addresses the issue of authenticity. The author points out that "the long-term success of EPCOT (...) indicates that the Imagineers⁶ were largely successful in creating national pavilions that passed the tourist's test of recognizable authenticity" (p. 69). Although the image of a past reality may not be entirely accurate, the experience does provide a meaningful time travel experience, which provides learning opportunities, not only by allowing an emotional engagement with the past – and making it available to a broader audience – but also by inviting reflections about history and how we live nowadays (HJEMDAHL 2002; LUKAS 2008).

2. The Three Metafunctions and Spatial Texts

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), proposed by the influential linguist Michael Halliday (1978; 1995), is a social semiotic approach which investigates language in its context. SFL examines language in order to understand its functions in different situations, the interpersonal relations set in it and also to understand how language, as a system, works (YOUNG; HARRISON, 2004). Halliday proposes three fundamental functions of language, named metafunctions, which act simultaneously in a text: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. The ideational metafunction reflects our experience of the world, the interpersonal metafunction concerns the use of language as a way to interact with others and

⁶ The name given to Disney's designers.

to establish relations. The textual metafunction, in its turn, is related to the formal construction of the text, and can also be described as a “facilitating function, since both the others depend on being able to build up sequences of discourse, organizing the discursive flow, and creating cohesion and continuity” (HALLIDAY; MATTHIESSEN, 2004, pp. 30, 31).

Halliday's (1985) notions of the metafunctions of language inspired Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to develop the grammar of visual design, which expands Halliday's concepts to multimodal texts. This adaptation enables analysts to examine visual images with a similar analytical tool used on verbal texts. Based mainly on SFL and the grammar of visual design, Ravelli (2000) analyzes the Sydney Olympic Store from a social semiotic approach, as a three-dimensional text, using the three metafunctions mentioned. In 2006, Ravelli could further develop the analytical framework to investigate physical spaces concerning museums as objects of study. Accordingly, Ravelli and Heberle (2016) analyze the *Museu da Língua Portuguesa*, in Brazil. Nevertheless, the use of a social semiotic approach in the analysis of physical spaces is relatively new in academia, representing an increasing interest in studies of Multimodality. Ravelli and Heberle (2016, p. 525) point out that spatial texts are present in our everyday life and are “an inherent part of our social world, contributing to how we live, work and play”. Concerning physical space as texts, the authors explain that:

A spatial text, however, is more than a mere physical building itself and its architecture; it also includes its content within and without, as well as how it is used by people (RAVELLI; MCMURTRIE, 2016). Spatial texts are inherently multimodal, including the material resources used to construct a building; forms of decoration and furnishing; aspects of design, such as spatial dimensions and layout; the use of light or sound; and so on (p. 525).

In the grammar of visual design and in spatial discourse analysis, the Hallidayan metafunctions – ideational, interpersonal and textual – correspond respectively to representational, interactional and compositional. Considering the adaptation of the metafunctions to physical spaces, the representational meaning is concerned with what the space is and what it does, that is, the “nature of events, the objects and participants involved, and the circumstances in which they occur” (UNSWORTH, 2001, p. 72). The analysis of representational meanings allows us to describe which objects are present and which materials are used in the space and their meaning in the context. In addition, as a meaning related to representation, the selected spatial texts here analyzed “need to be analyzed in terms of the process types they both manifest (what we can ‘see’ in them and what they

represent) and enable (what users can ‘do’ with them)” (RAVELLI; HEBERLE, 2016, p. 527). In terms of representational meanings, physical spaces and visual images can be categorized as either narrative or conceptual. Narrative representations “present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, and transitory spatial arrangements” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 59), while the participants are usually connected by vectors. On the other hand, conceptual representations usually present the participants in generalized categories such as class, structure or meaning, and they serve to inform, describe or classify something.

Interactional meanings refer to the relationship between the interactants and the physical space, and there are two sets of tools used to analyze it. The first one has to do with how interactants are positioned in relation to each other. In our analysis we have considered the devices proposed by Ravelli and Heberle (2016):

As described in Ravelli and McMurtrie (2016), interactants may be positioned through various devices as more or less equal to each other in terms of *Power* (for example, very high ceilings may make a visitor feel small); as more or less able to make direct *Contact* with the text (for example, whether visitors can easily see an exhibit); as more or less *Involved* with the text (for example, whether a room can be entered directly or needs to be approached obliquely); as more or less close in terms of *Social Distance* (for example, whether visitors can touch objects or see them only from behind glass); and as more or less free in terms of *Control* (for example, whether visitors can move where they want or need to follow a set path) (RAVELLI; HEBERLE, 2016, pp. 527, 528).

The second set of tools for the analysis of the interactional meaning relates to what the interactants feel in the space, which can be conducted using the tools *Binding* and *Bonding* (STENGLIN, 2008). While *binding* is used to analyze how comfortable and safe the interactants feel in a particular space, *bonding* concerns the interactants’ identifying themselves with the text, which in our case, refers to the places being analyzed.

Subsequently, compositional meanings refer to “the way in which the representational and interactive elements are made to relate to each other, the way they are integrated into a meaningful whole” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 176). The authors also define three analytical tools and interrelated systems: *Information Value*, *Salience* and *Framing*, related to how the information is distributed and organized. While information value refers to the placement of the elements in space (left and right, top and bottom, center and margin), salience refers to the importance of elements inside the physical space. Framing, on the

other hand, is concerned with how the elements of the space are connected or disconnected, as well as whether the space has physical frames, boundaries or fences, which may be associated with proximity and familiarity or detachment and disconnection.

Based on these analytical frameworks, the present study follows the pattern of analysis used in Ravelli (2000) and Ravelli and Heberle's (2016) studies, considering the World Showcase as a spatial text.

3. A Spatial Discourse Analysis of Disney's Epcot World Showcase

Our analysis of the World Showcase, categorized under the three meta-functions: representational, interactional and compositional meanings, address the two research questions mentioned in the introduction. After the analysis, the study presents a discussion of the main findings.

3.1 Representation

As already mentioned, the World Showcase is divided into eleven pavilions, each representing a different country. Even though each pavilion is adjacent to each other and there are no verbal signs specifying the name of the country, guests may become aware of each 'country' they are visiting, due to their physical dynamics and separation marks in style and visual elements. Regarding the choice of countries, the World Showcase has five European pavilions, two North American, one Central American, one African and two Asian, and the chosen countries are "United States neighbors, trading partners, and allies" (KRATZ; KARP, 1993, p. 35). From left to right, the countries represented are: Mexico, Norway, China, Germany, Italy, United States, Japan, Morocco, France, United Kingdom and Canada. The distribution is not geographically made by continents and seems to have no particular order or pattern, as can be seen in the official World showcase map below (*Figure 1*), which is offered in the entrance of the attraction with the options of several different languages.

Figure 1 - World Showcase Map

Source: http://orlandotouristinformationbureau.com/themeparks/disney_world/World-Showcase.htm, Access August 2020.

Each pavilion offers the guest a coherent and feasible narrative of each country through its themed architecture, replicas of historical monuments, restaurants, shops, museums, tours and live performances. The thematic tours, which can be found in some of the pavilions, such as Canada, Mexico, Norway, China, USA and France, usually present movies and performances that contextualize the country and provide information about their culture and history. In addition, the cast members in the pavilions are all originally from the country they are working in, and they also wear thematic costumes.

Besides, Disney's Imagineers were particularly concerned with authenticity when creating the World Showcase, as the pavilions needed to be designed according to established notions of the countries in the United States (SHEPPARD, 2016). Accordingly, all the items in the pavilions, from the architectural design to the costumes the cast members wear, were designed to allow guests to immediately recognize it as being representative of that specific country and its culture. Although all the pavilions offer multiple options of entertainment, these are not the same, as the only common aspects in all pavilions are restaurants and shops, a strong factor related to consumption habits. In the shops, for instance, there are plenty of options for the guests to buy, offering mostly souvenirs that are expected to be found in the real country of the pavilion. Similarly, the pavilions offer multiple options of sit-down restaurants and fast-food serving dishes that are particular related to that country's culture.

Even though the pavilions are located adjacent to each other and there are no signs that identify each country, that is, what guests see in the pavilions is

related to the country's traditional or stereotypical cultural artefacts, most likely derived from preconceived notions about that culture. In practical terms, for instance, by entering the Japan pavilion, the guest immediately sees a shop that sells *Hello Kitty* and *Pokémon* plush toys. Likewise, by entering the United Kingdom pavilion, a *Twinings Tea* shop is easily located and so on.

Regarding the attractions, from the eleven countries in the World Showcase, only five of them have museum displays: Mexico, Norway, China, Japan and Morocco. In their study about the museums in the pavilions, Kratz and Karp (1993) observe that all of the countries without museums are Western and industrial, and the ones which display exhibitions are the most foreign-seeming to Americans. The authors also explain that the museums are rather small compared to national museums and quote a relevant observation about Disneyland by philosopher Louis Marin who claims that "where something is incredible the full-scale model prevails, and where it is credible, the reduction serves to make it attractive to the imagination" (KRATZ; KARP, 1993, p. 38).

The architectural style in each of the pavilions varies considerably, since a common trait is the design of the buildings that represents the architecture of different time periods or regions within the same pavilion, as a form to represent the country providing elements of its history. Regarding their access, guests are allowed to enter all of the buildings. All pavilions have scaled-down replicas of famous monuments of the country, which provides the fantasy to see these monuments next to each other, when in reality they are located vastly apart (HOUSTON; MEAMBER, 2011). All the buildings in the Norway pavilion, for instance, are made of wood or stone (*Figure 2*), showcasing four typical Norwegian styles: *Setesdal*, *Bergen*, *Oslo* and *Ålesund* (PEDERSEN, 2012).

Figure 2 - Stave Church at the Norway Pavilion



Source: <http://www.wdwinfo.com/wdwinfo/guides/epcot/epws-norway.htm>, Access August 2020.

Overall, each pavilion can be seen as a narrative representation, as previously stated, because it tells the story of a country and it involves physical engagement from the guests. The visitors become *Reactors* when they are observing the *Phenomenon*, which are the monuments and the tours that present videos with landscapes of the real country. They can also be *Actors*, when they are buying souvenirs or eating in a restaurant, becoming active participants in the narrative of that physical space. In addition, the guests can also be seen as the *Phenomenon* itself, since when engaging with the environment, they become part of the pavilion with their actions being observed by others. Nevertheless, in terms of process types, the World Showcase can also be analyzed as a conceptual process, with each pavilion representing the Carrier, while all of its parts – the shops, restaurants, rides, museums and so on – represent its Attributes. The Germany pavilion, for instance, presents architecture that reflects different eras and regions, varying from buildings with façades⁷ that resemble medieval German castles to Bavarian style buildings with balconies and flowers on the ground (*Figure 3*), both symbolizing German orchestra styles.

Figure 3 - Germany Pavilion



Source: <http://www.wdwinfo.com/wdwinfo/guides/epcot/epws-germany.htm>, Access August 2020.

3.2 Interaction

In the entrance of the World Showcase, guests have to decide from which path they wish to start the tour: from the Western side (starting with Mexico) or from the Eastern side (starting with Canada). In terms of *Control*, as the countries are located around a lake, creating a circular walking path, guests can choose

⁷ A façade in architecture is usually the front part of the building, commonly used in film sets and themed attractions.

from which side to start. However, by choosing either one side, guests necessarily have to follow the whole path in order to see all the pavilions, since the lake creates this single path walk. Otherwise, they need to go back through the visited pavilions to leave the World Showcase. Inside each pavilion, however, guests are free to walk as they please, not having a specific path to follow.

In terms of Social Distance and the relation of the guests with the physical elements in the space, in all the pavilions almost everything can be touched. For instance, in the shops, almost all objects are easily accessible. Furthermore, the outside part of the pavilions has no restriction to what can be touched or not, as expected, considering the pavilion simulates the experience of tourism. However, one of the exceptions is the replica of the *Eiffel Tower* in the France pavilion. While in the real world it is possible to touch and even go up the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the one in Epcot cannot even be approached, as the guests can see it behind other buildings, not being able to see where it starts (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4 - Eiffel Tower in the France Pavilion



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France_Pavilion_at_Epcot, Access August 2020.

Therefore, despite being constructed with real materials, this tower works more as a form of decoration to symbolize and locate the pavilion, instead of a physical attraction for guests to explore. The probable reason is the size of the replica, as it is only 31 meters tall, as opposed to the 300 meters of the original (PEDERSEN, 2011). Another exception of areas where the guests cannot interact by touching are the museums and some exhibit tours inside The World Showcase, since there are glasses or barriers separating the guests from the objects being exhibited, for instance the spatial framings (*Figure 5*). Such separation of the guests from the objects in the museums helps to build a sense of authenticity for the space, since it mimics a real visit to a museum, considering that every-

thing in the exhibition is original from the country itself.

Figure 5 - “Kawaii: Japan’s Cute Culture” Exhibit in the Japan Pavilion



Source: <http://www.wdwinfo.com/wdwinfo/guides/epcot/epws-japan.htm>, Access August 2020.

Regarding the relations of *Power* concerning the interaction of the guests with the space, the whole environment seems to build an overwhelming sensation, since almost all the buildings, as semiotic resources, are very tall and salient, making the guests feel small in comparison. However, such trait is not necessarily a negative aspect, since its architectural style and size may contribute to the guests' immersion in the fantasy of the place. Inside the buildings, despite the fact that most of them have more than one floor, only the ground floor is accessible, as the second and third floor are used as decoration, considering there are no stairs to those places. In addition to the buildings, the salience of the reproduced monuments also contributes to the guests' impression of visiting a real city instead of an amusement park.

Figure 6 - Italy Pavilion



Source: <http://www.live-travel-blog.com/disneys-epcot-vs-the-world/>, Access August 2020.

The attractions are exposed in open and closed spaces (*Figure 6*). Concerning Binding, the shops and restaurants are well illuminated, and they carry a warm and welcoming appeal. Besides, the possible immediate contact with the staff and cast members provide a sense of safety inside those places, which makes guests feel comfortable and secure, creating strong binding. In addition, the Bonding potential is also strong, since the pavilions present cultural artefacts from different countries, the shops sell a range of products from brands that are popular worldwide – even Disney's own products – which will most likely make the guests find something they can recognize and identify with. Moreover, as mentioned before, the buildings and monuments displayed in the pavilions were built to look very similar to the original ones, which creates a familiarity with the place concerning the guests' knowledge of the country they are visiting.

Another aspect concerning interaction with the space is that while visiting the World Showcase, guests can assume different roles. They can choose to either take up a more passive role and only observe, not engaging in any of the options for activities and entertainment; or they can be more active and go to the rides and tours, to the shops, or still eat the local food or even talk to the cast members. These employees are generally approachable and eager to help the guests in what they might need. Ultimately, regarding the interaction between guests and the spaces at the World Showcase, our analysis has shown that guests predominantly play an active role, as they tend to engage in at least one of the activities provided.

3.3 Composition

In order to enter the World Showcase, the guest has first to go through Epcot's attraction *The Future World*. While both lands are very different in terms of content, they work as complementary to each other, since the Future World presents futuristic landscapes and technological attractions, while the World Showcase presents mainly the representation of the past of the nations. Even the location of the World Showcase as the attraction 'behind' (*Figure 7*) suggests this link with the future and the past. As Kratz and Karp (1993, pp. 34, 35) point out "set in relation to Future World, the World Showcase is an artful conglomeration of multiple 'pasts' out of which a united 'future' has emerged".

Figure 7 - Epcot Map

Source: <https://tudoviagem.org/dicas/epcot/>. Access August 2020.

In addition, in the World Showcase there is very little use of technology in the pavilions, where attractions tend to be simple, usually consisting of movies showing landscapes and videos of the real country, in contrast to the attractions in Future World. Yet, the only exception is *The American Adventure* pavilion, which has a thirty-minute animatronic presentation, a form of robotics animation, about the history of the United States. Regarding issues of *Information Value*, some structuring principles are relevant for the analysis of the composition of the pavilions. In the vertical axis, the zones “top” and “bottom” represent, respectively, values of “ideal” and “real”. The top is considered everything above the eye level, while “bottom” is what is placed on the floor or up to the level of the eye (RAVELLI, 2000). As an example, there is the Sportsman’s Shoppe in the United Kingdom pavilion (*Figure 8*), which mainly sells rugby and football equipment, all placed on the level of the eye and below, while in the upper part, there are several trophies displayed.

Figure 8 - Sportsman’s Shop

Source: <http://wdwkingdom.com/sportsmans-shoppe-epcot-united-kingdom-world-showcase-shopping/>. Access August 2020.

Thus, the top part of the space is the 'ideal', related to the objective of the sports' theme, as trophies are symbols of victory, while the sport's equipment and uniforms, the actual products to consume, are displayed at the eyelevel and/or bottom, symbolizing the 'real' part. Concerning the vertical axis and placement of items, our analysis has also shown that while most buildings of the pavilions have two or more floors, only the first floor is accessible for guests, while the others may work as decoration and architectural styles that help to build the representation of the place. Hence, in accordance with the grammar of visual design, the placement of the items regarding the lower and upper parts also represents what is real and what is ideal to the interactants. Another factor regarding the vertical axis placement concerns the Terracotta Warriors (*Figure 9*), which are figures dating from 210 BC found in Xi'an in 1974, displayed in the museum of the China pavilion. All sculptures that represent the warriors are placed on the floor below eye level. Such placement ideologically creates the sense of the warrior as real and ordinary people, which may suggest a relation to their status in History, instead of glamourizing their images.

Figure 9 - Terracotta Warriors in the China Pavilion Museum



Source: <http://www.wdwinfo.com/wdwinfo/guides/epcot/epws-china.htm>, Access August 2020.

The structuring principle of center and margin is also relevant when analyzing the World Showcase as a whole, and not an isolated pavilion. The American Adventure, which is how the United States pavilion is called, is at the center, in the middle of all the other pavilions. It is also the biggest and most salient of them all, which does not receive the name of its country. The analysis shows that the USA pavilion is clearly the most patriotic pavilion regarding all the semiotic resources in there. Some of them are the flowers in the garden in red, white and blue and a thirty-minute animatronic ride – also the longest in all of the pavilions – that tells

the history of the United States, hosted by two moving dolls representing the historical figures *Benjamin Franklin* and *Mark Twain*.

Regarding colors⁸, most buildings in the pavilions have light and neutral tones, usually with a bluish roof, and with the floors matching the color of the buildings. The use of neutral tones as a color scheme for the outside attractions in the pavilions might be an intentional visual design tool in order to highlight the reproduced monuments and elements of that particular country's culture, since the guest's attention is easily guided towards the reproduced elements which are mostly in a different color scheme.

Figure 10 - Japan Pavilion



Source: http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/Japan_Pavilion, Access August 2020.

This characteristic can be observed in the United Kingdom pavilion, where the red telephone boxes, one of London's traditional symbols, can be easily identified due to its bright red color among a pattern of neutral colors. Other examples of pavilions that present this feature are the Japan pavilion, where the torii gate in bright red works as a lure for attention (*Figure 10*), and also in the Canadian pavilion, with the totem poles and the flowers in the Victoria Gardens being emphasized among the rest of the buildings. However, this pattern of colors is broken by entering any shop, since the products are usually colorful and diverse (*Figure 11*), which helps to create the *binding* atmosphere of comfort, as can be seen in the Morocco Pavilion Shop.

8 Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 230) say that color "fulfils the three metafunctions simultaneously".

Figure 11 - Morocco Pavilion Shop

Source: <http://www.moroccopavilion.com/photos/gallery/marrakesh-arts-crafts/>, Access August 2020.

Furthermore, children's goods and toys, which are displayed to call their attention, are usually colorful and placed in the lower section of the shops, making them very attractive and easy to reach (*Figure 12*). Besides, the products for children are usually the first element seen when guests enter the shop.

Figure 12 - Mitsukoshi Department Store in the Japan Pavilion

Source: <http://www.wdwinfo.com/wdwinfo/guides/epcot/epws-japan.htm>, Access August 2020.

4. Discussion

The analysis undertaken indicates that Walt Disney's idealization of creating a magical place comes to life when analyzing semiotic resources of physical spaces of The World Showcase. Answering the research questions, we can say that regarding representational meanings, the semiotic resources basically portray the country's culture inside each pavilion and tend to perpetuate a sense of perfection and authenticity to the real inspired location. However, the notion of perfection presents an idealized version of the countries and their culture,

not opening space for problematizing, or questioning the validity of the spaces. Therefore, when visiting all the eleven different representations of different countries, guests are supposed to feel as if they were in the happiest place on earth. The lack of critical content is justified due to the purpose of the attraction to offer guests a pleasant ludic and fanciful experience, which is the goal of Disney's theme parks.

Concerning the interaction and its activities, it is possible to notice that the attraction as a physical space depends on the guests' will to engage and participate in its possible recreational activities, which creates a strong sense of immersion. The interaction of the guests within the environment helps to simulate the feeling that they become tourists of that specific country, not only due to the experience of buying products, eating local food, talking to "natives" (the cast members) and watching performances, but also because they see other guests doing the same. In other words, the guests' interaction with the environment (in the restaurants, museums, shops, etc.) is another powerful tool of immersion that the World Showcase attractions provide. Likewise, the pavilions present a strong binding potential, in terms of comfort and safety, and also a strong bonding potential, as they provide elements that guests would recognize from different cultures, creating a familiar atmosphere.

Regarding composition, the replicas of monuments and buildings particular to the culture of the original countries and the souvenirs in the shops are foregrounded in all of the pavilions with the use of bright colors, big size and strategic placement. This foregrounding contributes to create a positive impact on the guests as soon as they enter one of the pavilions. In addition, the placement of children's goods and toys in the lower part of the shops may contribute to consumption, while the placement of idealized symbols, such as the sports' trophies, in the upper part, shows that the spatial analysis framework is aligned with the analysis of physical spaces.

Final Remarks

Our spatial analysis has shown that the semiotic resources used are interconnected and constitute what Bezemer and Kress (2016, p.23) call "a multimodal ensemble: a coherent, integrated, communicational unit". The division into the three metafunctions allowed us to notice how each of them helps to create a positive, engaging and dynamic experience for the guests visiting the attractions.

The analysis showed that the spaces in the pavilions allow the guests to perceive the attraction as authentic, even though they are portrayed in an idealized way compared to the real country. Besides, it described the semiotic resources used to create bonding and binding connections between the guests and the environment for the feeling of immersion in the park. In addition, it showed how the organization of the semiotic resources in every pavilion contributes to enhance the overall guest experience. The options of entertainment and consumption provided by the World Showcase pavilions are intended to create a globalized united community, portraying the countries and nations in a flawless way. The lack of real-world issues may suggest that although inspired by real world locations, the World Showcase land is also part of the fantasy that Disney provides to the guests.

As a suggestion for further research, it would be interesting to carry out a comparative analysis of the semiotic elements presented in the World Showcase contrasted with the Future World, since both are in the same theme park - Disney's Epcot. From a more critical stance, it also seems interesting to ask about the criteria used to portray only those eleven American-friendly countries, most financially stable countries, and some which may be considered exotic or arouse guests' curiosity. Lastly, as object of analysis for critical studies within multimodality and social semiotics, the analysis of physical spaces as spatial texts seems necessary, since places are intrinsically multimodal, carrying many different meanings.

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