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Cultural transportation: A multimodal analysis of Julie Sykes' Unicorn Academy

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Abstract

This research study analyzes the magical school trope in a Netflix series Unicorn Academy (2018present) by Julie Sykes and Linda Chapman in the contemporary fantasy of children through the lens of multi-modal social semiotic analysis. The study examines different verbal and visual modes of communication to create meaning and multi-modal resources that transform the traditional fantasy genre for modern children. The study based on Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory which is focused on representational, interactive, and compositional meanings that describes the narrative discourse, character interaction, visual imagery, color symbolism, spatial organization and compositional structure in the Unicorn Academy. The result shows that it presented the meaning through the interdependent use of both linguistic and visual semiotic resources with respect to the traditional magical school archetype. However, this study discusses the transition of magical school into an ecologically interconnected and collective learning environment. Unicorns are presented as symbolic images of purity or transcendence as well as emotionally expressive partners. Result shows that Multimodal fantasy narrative merges the mythic traditions and Western culture value systems such as inclusivity, environmental awareness, emotional literacy, and collaborative identity development. This research study contributes to children's fantasy literature, multimodal discourse analysis, and contemporary adoption of the magical school narrative.

Keywords: Unicorn Academy, Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory, collective learning environment

Introduction

Fantasy literature is an important part of the imagination and cultural experience in children's literature. Over the past few years, modern fantasy stories reshaped the mythological characters and schooling environments to reflect new cultural

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values and worldwide perceptions. An example, such as the Netflix series Unicorn Academy by Julie Sykes and Linda Chapman (2018 - Present), a fiction story incorporates the magic school archetype along with the mythological symbolism of the unicorn. In folklore literature, unicorns symbolize innocence, purity, and mystical power. Nevertheless, in contemporary fantasy literature, these mythological characters are frequently changed into different dynamics.

Moreover, modern children's literature is based more on multimodal storytelling, during which the meaning is created as the result of the interaction of various semiotic modes, such as language, images, color, spatial organization, and visual composition. The text and visual combination of elements strengthen the narratives based on complex ideas in a manner that is visually appealing and emotionally touching to the young reader. In this study, the magical school trope is discussing unicorn mythology in Unicorn Academy by using the theoretical approach of Multimodal Social Semiotics. This study also examines the relationship between textual narration and visual representation. The research aims to add research-based children's fantasy literature by emphasizing the importance of multimodality in making narrative meaning, and by showing fantasy literature that reflects the changing cultural values regarding cooperation, emotional intelligence, and environmental consciousness.

It served as a major cultural tool that is based on moral values and social standards. Magical activities in schools create a symbolic space where learning, discipline, socialization, and identity are examined and linked to children's real experiences. According to Levy and Mendelsohn (Levy & Mendelsohn, 2016, pp. 1–10), fantasy literature is usually positioned between reality and fiction. Children can relate real-life issues through imaginative and symbolic narratives. In this case, the school is a familiar social institution that plays an important role in building a narrative. It supports social settings, including the relations in hierarchies of power, friendship, exclusion, and moral issues. According to Zipes (Zipes, 2001, pp. 1–10), children's fantasy is a mirror of the dominating cultural ideologies and faces the challenges of various norms.

Unicorn Academy (2018–present), a project by Julie Sykes and Linda Chapman, has a unique story that changes the environment as one of the most important contemporary retellings of the magical school narrative. The show is unique due to

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its focus on friendship between mortals and fantasy, as well as emotional education and nature.

❖ Myth, Modernity, and the Unicorn Symbol

The main part of Unicorn Academy is the mythical creature which is the unicorn. It is traditionally represented with purity, transformation, and of a divinely created creature. According to Eliade (Eliade, 1963, pp. 5–8), myth is a symbolic system that represents belief, cultural meanings, and divine truths. Unicorn Academy recreated the mythology of unicorns in its classical form and resinifies to accommodate the current cultural issues (Frye, 1957, pp. 95– 100). The second argument that myth forms are continually molded to the needs and values of a specific time in history also applies. Berman (Berman, 1982, pp. 15–23) hypothesized that the current culture type re-creates traditional symbols to assign meaning to the rapidly changing social situation. The myth of modernization at Unicorn Academy is also a reflection of the general conditions of modernity. Giddens (Giddens, 1991, pp. 32–33), describes modernity as being marked by reflexivity, fluid identities, and the reconfiguration of traditional meanings.

❖ Multi-modality in Contemporary Children's Fantasy

Modern fantasy children's literature evolves into a type of literature that includes written language, but also utilizes visual and graphic methods of representation, including illustrations, color symbolism, space, typography, and character. These texts establish their meaning verbally, and in a dynamic interaction between different semiotic resources. The multimodal design is particularly important for young readers who often interpret based on visual attributes as well as linguistic matter.

This study applies to Kress's (Kress, 2010, pp. 159–170), theory of "Multimodal Social Semiotics" which consider text and image as interacting elements in the process of constructing meaning in multimodal discourse. Image, color, layout, gesture are socially constructed resources and are part of the meaning of making with language. These modes in children's fantasy collaborate with direct interpretation, convey emotional tone, and convey the ideological messages inherent in the story.

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Magical school stories are immensely popular in children's fantasy literature. It is a recently famous discussed topic, especially one that anticipates myth modernization and multimodal meaning-making which was not adequately explored by academics. Consequently, recent fantasy series that are largely based on visual narration and symbolic images in children's media have not received the corresponding critical coverage. Moreover, the role of multi-modality in the exchange of social values, for example, through illustrations of color schemes, spatial design, and character depiction that has not been adequately theorized in the context of magical school narratives.

This research study focuses on analyzing Unicorn Academy from a Multimodal perspective and a conceptual contribution to children's literature. It is a relatively new series of Fantasy Literature that is not well-known for scholarly literary studies. Pedagogically, the study is helpful for teachers, curriculum designers, and researchers as it offers some insight into the use of Fantasy Literature as a tool for teaching students to develop empathy, cooperation, and environmental responsibility. This research enriches the interdisciplinary studies that relate to literature, visual culture, and education, while also providing opportunities for future research in the field of Multimodality.

This qualitative analysis includes only text and images. The study focused on intertextual references to other magical school narratives to provide context for the works, rather than on comparison and contrast. Thus, even with these limitations, the research study contains a theoretical framework and multimodal analysis with relevant information on the response of contemporary fantasy children's literature in reinterpreting magic school narratives and mythology, as well as suggestions for future reader-based or cross-cultural research.

Review of the Literature

This study reviews the academic literature on the magical school trope and multimodal meaning-making in children's fantasy literature. It helps to discuss Unicorn Academy in the context of the extensive academic discussion about children's fantasy as a part of cultural and ideological space, the development of magical school narratives, and the modernization of myth in modern texts.

❖ Children's Fantasy Literature and Cultural Meaning

Literature regarding Children's fantasy has a major form of cultural practice. It builds the concepts of moral principles, societal norms, and ideologies. According to Tatar (Tatar, 2009, pp. 11–19), fantasy offers children the chance to play imaginatively with fear, desire, morality, and conflict. It provides symbolic presentation to emotional and psychological problems during the developing period of children.

- **Ideological Role of Children's Literature**

Scholars emphasized the ideological role of children's literature. Generally, schools are the main places to build a narrative in children's fantasy worlds. Stephens (Stephens, 1992, pp. 1–8), also claims that ideological presumptions about education, authority, and social order are frequently coded into children's literature, and schools are a major mode of representing culture. Zipes (Zipes, 2001, pp. 1–10), argues that fantasy texts for children are based on dominant cultural discourses.

Levy and Mendelsohn (Levy & Mendelsohn, 2016, pp. 1–10) argue that children's fantasy lies between reality and fiction but focuses on its ability to symbolize daily social life. They claim that fantasy worlds tend to replace real-world institutions, such as families, governments, and schools, which possess the power to modify societal rules.

❖ Multimodality in Children's Fantasy Narratives

In this context, image and text are involved in the dynamic process of meaning making instead of being a mere depiction of written material. According to Nikolajeva and Scott (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 17), the interaction between the verbal and visual modes in children's literature can have various forms, which are symmetrical, complementary, enhancing, or contradictory interaction. Visual elements in complementary relationships furnish further information not mentioned in the text.

- **Visual and Textual Meaning Making**

Indirectly, multimodality is further illustrated in fantasy texts since in such texts the worlds described are usually much different than real life. Serafini (Serafini, 2014, pp. 19–27, 55–67), states that visual literacy forms part of the modern reading culture, especially among the younger generation who engage with stories via various semiotic levels. Emotions of characters are perceived by readers using facial expression, body language and color scheme whereas the cultural values and institutional organization in fictional worlds are expressed by landscapes and architectural designs.

- **Spatial Design in Multimodal Narratives**

Another important element of multimodal storytelling in fantasy stories is spatial design. Unsworth (Unsworth, 2008, pp. 15–30), argues that spatial organization of illustrations expresses social relations and institutional stratifications. In magical schools, spatial design is also a mirror of the philosophy of education of the school. Grand halls, open grounds, and common meeting rooms are used to signify shared education and collaboration, whereas solitary rooms or benchlike seating can be utilized to represent power and control. Eliade (Eliade, 1963, pp. 5–8), stated that it is a sacred power that is experienced as a common human being. According to old mythology, Dragons, unicorns, phoenixes are creatures connected with spiritual transformation, moral purity or cosmic harmony.

When these animals are used in fantasy literature of children, they keep their symbolic meaning but are adapted to the modern narrative setting. Faerie animals are used as the embodiment of environmental knowledge, as they lead young heroes to a higher level of environmental awareness (Nikolajeva, 2010, pp. 155–168). According to Nikolajeva (Nikolajeva, 2010, pp. 13– 26), school-based stories are important for social interaction with a child. Especially, a magical school develops other pedagogical models and systems of values that consider education as an emotional development process, ethical learning, and social collaboration, instead of limiting it to school courses.

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❖ The Magical School Trope in Fantasy Narratives

The magical schools are the most persistent and powerful tropes in children's fantasy fiction. It merges the familiarity of institutional education with the freedom of fantasy magic. These stories focus on discipline, organized learning, adhering to rules, and moral growth. On the other hand, dull institutional power is utilized in the form of humor, awkwardness, and magic accidents.

Besides, the trope gained international fame after Harry Potter series (1997-2007) of J. K. Rowling, who greatly broadened the thematic and ideological range of the magical school story. Harry Potter magical school is a place where individual identity is formed, belonging to a community and making a moral decision. According to Nikolajeva (Nikolajeva, 2010, pp. 13– 26), Power, voice and subjectivity in literature for young readers. Routledge.) school-based fantasy is frequently predictable in students' relationships, and moral conflict is the main focus of character growth. According to Rudd (Rudd, 2013, pp. 1–10), these texts legitimize educational hierarchies by making them easy and non-menacing to child readers, and they support schooling as a key process of socialization.

According to Levy and Mendelsohn (Levy & Mendelsohn, 2016, pp. 1–10), contemporary schools of magic frequently delegated power and made learning non-hierarchical, collaborative, and relationship based. Diversity, emotional intelligence, cooperation, and ethical responsibility are becoming more prevalent in contemporary fantasy, replacing the focus on the individual heroism of stories. Also, other researchers such as Hintz and Tribunella (Hintz & Tribunella, 2019, pp. 355–370), explain that the new generation of children's fantasy depicts general cultural trends of empathy-based stories, in which power is characterized by care, collaboration, and interdependence as opposed to domination. Modern narratives, as Kress (Kress, 2010, pp. 159– 170), stated that children are becoming increasingly dependent on multi-modal kinds of semiotic resources. Text-based stories are inadequate to analyze the fantasies of children.

❖ Myth, Archetypes, and Fantasy Narrative Structures

Another critical framework for explaining the adaptability of myths in fantasy literature is Northrop Frye's theory of mythic structures (Frye, 1957, pp. 95–100). By 'myths,' Frye does not refer to fixed cultural artefacts, but dynamic narrative systems

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that are constantly reinterpreted to address the ideological and emotional requirements of a historical moment. Mythic adaptation enables the stories of fantasy to present culture without compromising their symbolic strength.

Eliade (Eliade, 1963, pp. 5–8), defines myth as a divine story that holds eternal truths and fundamental cultural meanings of societies to express existential values involving origin, morality, and change. Stephens (Stephens, 1992, pp. 1–8), claims that archetypal symbolism in children's literature helps in identity formation that offers patterns of selfhood, moral choice, and social belonging with appeal to all cultural situations. According to Tatar (Tatar, 2009, pp. 11– 19), mythic stories in children's literature were simplified and relate to daily life. Thus, it is effective in terms of its emotional appeal and academic quality.

According to Hintz and Tribunella (Hintz & Tribunella, 2019, pp. 355–370), interspecific relations are becoming a more popular subject in contemporary fantasy. It serves as a metaphor for empathy, collaboration, and environmental care. According to Todorov (Todorov, 1975, pp. 24–33), fantasy corresponds to a mode of narration that occurs in the gap between the explanation of natural and supernatural phenomena. The theory of fantastic by Todorov presented in The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre (1975). In fantasy literature among children, this hesitation is frequently found in the initial stage of the story as the main character first faces magical aspects that demand a challenge of their perception towards reality. Using the theory by Todorov, scholars examine fantasy stories that lead to the fictional world and force that the fictional world is true.

The other significant theoretical framework that greatly enhances taxonomy of fantasy by Farah Mendelsohn, featured in Rhetoric of Fantasy (2008). Mendelsohn defines four basic types of fantasy stories depending on the way of interaction of the magical world with the real world. The first one is portal fantasy, in which characters are taken into a magical world through a portal or gateway to the real world. The typical examples are Alice in Wonderland and The Chronicles of Narnia. The second one is the immersive fantasy in which the whole story is set in a magical world that characters have already accepted as regular. The third one is intrusion fantasy, in which supernatural elements appear in the normal world, and destabilize it. Lastly, liminal fantasy is when magic elements are present at the heart of reality and are usually obscure or ambiguous.

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❖ Sociological and Cultural Theories in Fantasy Studies

The novel highlighted further widening the idea of cultural capital by Pierre Bourdieu in his book Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (1984). According to Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 18–20, 170–171), cultural institutions like schools have a significant role in re-creating social hierarchies through the transmission of cultural knowledge and values that influence social identities of individuals. Using the Bourdieu theory enables researchers to understand magical education as a symbolic depiction of the real-life educational systems and social division. The second school of thought is the Reader-Response Theory, especially those of Wolfgang Iser (Iser, 1978, pp. 20–22), and Louise Rosenblatt (Rosenblatt, 1978, pp. 12, 20–21). This method focuses on active participation in reading literary texts. The reader-response theory asserts that there is no meaning in the text but rather a meaning that is created between the text and the imagination, emotions, and experiences.

❖ Myth, Ritual, and Modern Identity in Fantasy

This is further enriched by anthropological theory. Arnold van Gennep in The Rites of Passage (1909) defines three stages of initiation rituals: separation, liminality, and incorporation. This liminality concept was later developed by Victor Turner, who refers to the liminal phase as a transitional state in which individuals live between and among social identities. The magic school serves as such a liminal place. It is spatially and symbolically alien to normal society.

According to Giddens (Giddens, 1991, pp. 32–33), modernity is a state of increased self-reflexive awareness, where individuals and institutions actively respond to emerging social conditions by practicing the old traditions. The concept of late-modern identity becomes more about relationships and fluidity than about fixity or hierarchy. In modern times, Bauman (Bauman, 2000, pp. 31–33), described identities are made in social interaction with emotional attachments and with moral responsibility rather than by inheritance. This change indicates fantasy narratives of children, where the ideal is not about individual supremacy or heroism but rather about collaboration, sympathy, or solidarity. Mythic characters are related to transcendence and power. The characters are re-signified as relational agents, being incorporated into social and ecological webs.

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❖ Magical School Narratives in Contemporary Fantasy Texts

This magical school cliché gained more recognition world-wide after Harry Potter and The Philosopher Stone by J. K. Rowling (Rowling, 1997, pp. 83–97). Harry Potter series.

Bloomsbury). Rowling organized magic in a full-scale learning institution, Despite the previous children fantasy books which featured magical tutors, back door training, or ad full scaling. Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry makes mythic archetypes, European folklore, medieval alchemy and the clichés of the British boarding school story into a coherent and internally controlled world.

Those who criticize the series such as Farah Mendelsohn insist that it is part of the portal-quest fantasy form, where the main character alters his life and enters a parallel world where the rules are internally consistent. The focus of this transition is Hogwarts in the form of adventure and builds a system of institute which orders magical knowledge to the curriculum, standardized exams (O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s) and disciplinary rules, hierarchy. In this regard, Rowling turns magic into controlled scholarly movement instead of an accidental or even inherent gift. This supernatural force of the bureaucratic as it is called by scholars in children's literature study is a replica of the contemporary educational systems, hence making the fantasy world both extraordinary and familiar.

❖ Gender Representation and Institutional Change in Fantasy Narratives

This change was observed by restructuring the institutional culture within the context of magical school stories. The rivalry between houses and competition has ceased to be the major defining aspect of the academy. Rather, it turns into a place where emotional intelligence, compassion, and moral collaboration are developed. According to researchers who believe in drawing on the ethics of care, like Carol Gilligan, Relational models of moral development focus on responsiveness, dialogue and responsibility that are especially prevalent in contemporary storytelling (Gilligan, 1982, pp. 17–19). These values are reflected in magical institutions of girl-centered series as they do not focus on hierarchical dominance, but trust in mutual responsibility. In female magical schools, friendship groups are often used to substitute hostile hierarchies as driving storytelling force. Friendships among

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colleagues are growing and conflict solving factors. Instead of describing magic as something to master or weaponize, these stories describe its harmonization.

❖ Multimodality in Children's Fantasy Literature

According to Nikolajeva and Scott (2006), the relationship between text and image in children's literature is not independent. Recent research focuses on the importance of multimodality in children's literature in which the meaning is created through interaction of language, images, and space. For example, written language, image, color, layout, typography, and spatial organization. Hopkins and Weisberg (Hopkins & Weisberg, 2021, article no. 105047), demonstrate that fantasy narratives are based on visual and imaginative models that help children to comprehend more complicated concepts by placing them in emotionally significant and visually sensible settings. Most of the current literature focuses on the use of picture books, early literacy resources, or texts (Serafini, 2014, pp. 19–27). Although these studies have contributed greatly to the body of knowledge on visual-verbal interaction, there are many gaps in longer series of fantasies that involve extended narrative progression and a changing visual symbolism.

Methodology

In this study, qualitative research design based on multimodal textual analysis is used to evaluate the magical school trope and its mythological symbolism as re-signified in Unicorn Academy. It applies Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory to provide a systematic analysis of verbal and visual components to answer the research questions.

❖ Research Design

The current research design is a qualitative research design, which is especially appropriate when it comes to the interpretive analysis of literary and visual texts. Qualitative research is concerned with the investigation of meanings, representation, and cultural interpretations as opposed to numerical measurement or statistical analysis. Creswell (Creswell, 2013, pp. 44–46), notes that qualitative research allows scholars to explore that individuals and societies create meanings by using language, images, and cultural artifacts. Qualitative analysis in the literary

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studies context offers a framework of meticulously analyzing structures of narratives, thematic patterns, and symbolic representations in texts.

The study is thus based on an interpretive analysis of texts which closely examines both verbal and visual elements of the story. The other reason qualitative research design is selected is that the study is interested in exploring the metamorphosis of mythological symbolisms and narrative conventions instead of quantifying measurable variables. The research focused on interpretation and meaning making to demonstrate fantasy literature among modern children transforms the traditional mythological symbols and narrative tropes.

❖ Data Collection

The main source of data that is used in this study is the narrative texts and illustrations of the Unicorn Academy series by Julie Sykes and Linda Chapman. The series, which has been in print since 2018, has captured young readers' imagination through its imaginative narratives and magical themes of learning and mythological symbolism. The researcher can select some materials that are useful in achieving the research goals by using purposive sampling. The analysis that is carried out involves verbal and visual content. The words in a narrative talk about the events and relationships of the story in the form of verbal elements: narrative description, dialogue between character-to-character interactions, and narrative commentary.

❖ Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this research is Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory, which is mainly grounded on the writings of Gunther Kress (Kress, 2010, pp. 54–60) and Kress and van Leeuwen (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 114–135). Conventionally, the main vehicle of meaning in the analysis of literature has been written words. Consequently, scholars have to study both words and images to gain complete insight into a story that conveys its themes and messages. The interactive meaning in the second dimension is related to the interaction between the viewer or reader and the participants represented in the narration.

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- **Textual Analysis**

This study is analytical and carried out through textual means which are systematic such as, it involves a five-stage systematic analytical process aimed at evaluating both verbal and visual contents of the chosen texts. It ensures systematic and comprehensive data interpretation through such a methodological approach. The first stage is a time of intensive reading and viewing of selected texts and artwork. During this stage, the study was explained through the narrative passages and visual images with great attention, to identify common themes, symbols, and narrative patterns. Specific focus is put on the aspects of magical education, relations between humans and unicorns, symbolism in mythology, and the depiction of the environment.

The second stage is devoted to mode identification. The study recognizes and classifies the different semiotic resources existing in the story. They include narrative language, dialogue, color, layout, space, placement of characters, and symbolic images. The third phase entails multimodal interpretation. In this stage, the study will focus on the relationship between the verbal and visual mode to create meaning in a story. The fourth stage consists of thematic mapping. In this stage, the results of the preceding analyses are grouped into thematic categories which reflect the objectives of the research. Thematic mapping gives the researcher an opportunity to detect patterns in various texts and illustrations.

The last step is contextual interpretation. At this step, the results of the analysis are analyzed in terms of the larger context of fantasy literature about children and cultural discourse of the present. This study investigates the way of story corresponds to contemporary views on education, environmental responsibility and human relations.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This study presents a multimodal study of the Unicorn Academy series which was theoretically based thoroughly discussed according to different themes. The text as a multimodal musical organization with visual and linguistic materials links together as opposed to traditional literary analysis. The study has been structured around the three meta functions of meaning-making in social semiotics: representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. It

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shows that Unicorn Academy simply imitates the traditional patterns of the magical school story that has been popularized by other books and movies like Harry Potter through a lot of qualitative analysis.

❖ **Representational Meaning**

Representational meaning is a conceptualization of a text that creates and portrays participants, actions, settings, and abstract concepts to convey specific meanings of reality. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen discuss the concept of representational meaning in a visual text in Reading images: The grammar of visual design in which they suggested that representational meaning works through two primary processes including Narrative processes and Conceptual processes. The interplay of narrative and conceptual makes a unique representational structure where actions, frames, and symbolization interrelate. Using this representational design, the story conveys values that are relevant to modern culture issues regarding empathy, inclusiveness, and environment friendly.

- **Magical School as an Eco-Relational Institution**

The school is generally portrayed as a hierarchy organization with strong hierarchical authority, house competitions, surveillance, and structured exams as features in stories of canonical magical schools, including Harry Potter. Unicorn Academy, on the contrary, re-creates the magical school as an eco-relational school. Instead of stressing hierarchy and bureaucratic structure, the academy is presented as a free, environmentally enclosed community.

- **Verbal Representation**

In linguistics, the narrative shows the prevalence of the lexicon associated with the following topics such as friendship, trust, partnership, teamwork, and emotional development. Teachers are not depicted as tyrannical figures; rather, they are portrayed as those who inspire others to grow in terms of their emotional and moral awareness. In this series, educational success is not defined as outperforming others or studying in isolation through performing complex spells. A successful case is characterized by the lasting connection of a student with her unicorn.

- **Visual Representation**

This ideological reposition is strengthened and enhanced by the visual mode. The academy is constantly presented as spacious and airy. It is amid nature's greenery. Notably, the academy does not visually take over the space where it is located. It seems to be in harmony with space. According to the multimodal framework by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen in context of Spatial composition and environment adds in the representational meaning by creating the way viewers perceive the connection between the participants and the surrounding environment.

- **Unicorns as Relational Object**

In Western mythology, the unicorn has long been deemed a sign of purity, transcendence, and spiritual grace, as well as sacred superiority. According to the Lore of the Unicorn, it is often depicted as being an elusive and untouchable animal that is not subjected to normal human contact and serves as a symbol of moral or divine excellence. The unicorn has ceased to be a far-off symbol of extension and has become a semiotic object in both the story and the image.

- **Narrative Processes**

On the level of narrative processes, unicorns are placed in the status of coprotagonists, but not as symbolic accessories. Unicorns are also portrayed as affective creatures. They feel happy, scared, skeptical, and resolute. Emotional reactions are not limited to reactive gestures but usually act as triggers to the narrative. Furthermore, unicorns evolve like humans. They suffer insecurity, cope with challenges, and become better through collective learning.

- **Visual Processes**

This narrative repositioning is supported by the visual mode. The facial features of unicorns are very expressive, especially in the use of exaggerated and emotionally descriptive eyes. Facial expression is one of the most important semiotic tools that indicate internal processes and prompt the reader to empathize. Emotional openness can only be seen as a visual contradiction to the historical image of the unicorn being far and inaccessible.

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- **Magic and harmonization**

In most stories about magic, the principles of magic refer to magic as a force to be mastered and thus transformed into a means of power. The Unicorn Academy gives a fresh perspective on what magic is. Instead of being defined as a means of manipulation, magic becomes a process of establishing harmony. Trust between the partners is always a precondition for magic to be activated. The plot is told in different versions stating that magic will never work in an atmosphere of suspicion and emotional disconnection. The concept of magic also receives changes due to environmental balance. Magic disturbances are usually considered to stem from ecological imbalance. The text conveys the message that balance is the real power of the self or for the other, emotion or action and humanity or nature.

❖ **Interactive Meaning**

Interactive meaning concerns the association formed between the represented participants in the text and the implied reader and viewer. In the theory developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen presented in Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design, interactive meaning is designed through visual tools, including gaze, social distance, perspective, and modality.

- **Eye Contact and Emotional Interaction**

The use of gaze is one of the most important interactive devices of the series. Kress and van Leeuwen state that the image sets the relationship, which they call a demand relationship, when a participant in the depicted situation looks at the viewer. Direct gazing is applied in Unicorn Academy illustration, especially in critical moments full of emotion or intimacy. Unicorns tend to look straight from the book into the reader's face with their powerful and bright gaze demonstrating weakness, feelings, and resolve. The series incorporates the viewers into a relational construct through encouraging intimacy and emotional accessibility.

- **Social Distance and Framing**

In the Grammar of Visual Design, as formulated by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design, social distance is created using the same framing decisions as interpersonal distance is created in real

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life. These framing strategies are repeatedly applied, and the text develops emotional safety. The observer is incorporated into the social scene in the academy. The repetition of framing terms of intimacy and conversation makes the institution encoded as navigable and inclusive as an emotion. By these interactive options, the academy is not symbolized as an authority hub filled with fear, but it is a familiar community based on relational closeness.

- **Modality and Realism**

In social semiotics, modality is the extent of realism or believability of a representation. In Unicorn Academy, visual modality operates through the meticulous blending of fantastic and psychological realism. The narrative world is obviously fantastical, featuring unicorns, magical energy, and bright landscapes. Faces are delicately detailed, and expressions of varying emotions including doubt, embarrassment, pride and relief are captured. The brain can connect these images of feeling with certain psychological solidness cases based on compatibility of feelings.

❖ **Compositional Meaning**

Compositional meaning entails semiotic components that have been organized in a visual frame in a way that creates sense and direction to interpretation. The compositional techniques have a significant importance in the creation of the magical world at Unicorn Academy, which is inclusive and environmentally friendly.

- **Color as Ideological Coding**

The color in Unicorn Academy is not just a pretty feature, but a systematic bearer of symbolism and emotion. The tone coloring of the series is dominated by pastel shades, light tones, and radiant colors forming a visual, soft and emotionally welcoming environment. Instead of using dramatic contrasts and chiaroscuro effects, the illustrations are inclined to use more balanced and harmonious transitions of colors. It is also not insignificant that there are no thick shadows, no dark Gothic palettes or extremely contrasting black. Unicorn Academy, on the other hand, has a quite different visual tone. Whereas oppressive tones are hardly found in the visual environment of Unicorn Academy. There is also an encoding of

inclusiveness with color. Different but complementary palettes are applied to characters and unicorns, to lend support to individuality in unity.

- **Findings of Value of Information and Spatial Equality**

In the context that is expressed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in the book Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design, the value of information is arranged in space. No less important is the vertical positioning of the participants that can cipher the hierarchy, the authority, or the subordination. In the Unicorn Academy series, the compositional structure is consistently opposed to the vertical and hierarchy. Meaning is formed based on relational correspondence rather than vertical excellence. Education is not viewed as a top-down process of conveying power but as a cooperative, mutual process. Spatial equality is then a visual expression of ethical equality.

- **Salience and Ethical Focus**

Salience is defined as the level of attention that some elements receive from the viewer. Kress and van Leeuwen identify the factors of size, color contrast, sharpness, brightness, and positioning in the frame as the way of constructing salience. Emotional attachment is always given high salience at Unicorn Academy. The series predetermines relational ethics as the chief focus of the narration by focusing on scenes of reassurance, partnership, or joint development. The larger size also adds to the prominence of bonding moments. In contrast, conflict scenes are, in most cases, scarcely regarded as a dominant element of the visual field, either in terms of scale or centrality in composition.

As the viewer, we are taught to pay attention to the points of contact and development as the most important occurrences in the story world. Due to the application of modernity theory, the myth at Unicorn Academy is recreated reflexively instead of being kept as a fixed legacy of the past. In this context, students re-negotiate their identity in relation to the others around them, in the context of tasks in which they have to work together, on the basis of emotions and feelings, and the myth from the media doesn't just repeat itself, but it has a new meaning, a new interpretation, a new significance, and is used in a more complex way in denoting the multidimensional nature of modern society.

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❖ **The School of Magic as Liminal Space**

The magical school presented at Unicorn Academy explained in terms of the anthropological notion of liminality which was first coined by Arnold van Gennep and subsequently elaborated by Victor Turner in his works about rites of passage. In the fictitious world of Unicorn Academy, the school functions as an exact such a transitional realm. Anthropologically, the characters are in a liminal state where they are neither attached to the previous social identities nor have formed new ones. The fact that magical companions exist also enhances the emotional aspect of the liminal space.

In the magical school Unicorn Academy, the scenarios in which characters have to make choices between their own needs and the needs of the other characters, and the environment serve this role. A sense of responsibility is gradually developed, which extends beyond the individual, as the student must overcome these obstacles. Despite these institutionalized roles, the liminal space that is depicted in the series is somewhat different than in most classical initiation narratives. Characters communicate, share duties, and help each other emotionally as they strive to find shared solutions.

Thematic Summation of Results

Unicorn Academy has several themes, which have an interrelated structure and affect the overall meaning of the series. These themes are not mutually exclusive, but they do overlap and mutually reinforce one another. They provide a logical organization for the series so that it has an educational, social, and ethical message. The former hegemonic theme is the theme of relational pedagogy: education is seen as a process other than top-bottom teaching and is based on emotional cooperation. The academic process in the academy takes place through socializing, communal problems, and empathy among the students, the tutors, and their unicorn friends. Knowledge does not pass downwards from authority to learners, but rather is built among them through dialogue, empathy, and supportive relationships.

The empowerment theme is another point which has an added dimension of moralistic element in the series, in that the gender inclusive theme has been observed. The academy does not see power as being about dominance, aggression, and strict hierarchies, but rather about empathy, cooperation, and caring. The

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development of meaning is carried out using image coordination, dialogues, characters, and symbolic motifs.

Discussion

The purpose of the current research was to investigate the magical school trope that represented and the re-signification of the unicorn mythology in the narrative text of Unicorn Academy using the theoretical framework of Multimodal Social Semiotics. The story is repeated a few times, with the emphasis that the students' success is not because they are successful people, but because of the teamwork and bonding they have with their unicorn friends. Instead of merely symbolic figures of innocence, unicorns in the story have their personalities, feelings, and identities that enable them to play an active role in the unfolding of the story. In the story, this relationship is transformed into a magical power available to everyone.

In a multi-modal approach, another significant finding of the study is the fact that visual representation is used to construct the meaning of the narrative. The drawings in the text are of great use to characterize both human and mythical characters. Moreover, the very image of the academy serves as one of the ideological messages of the narrative. The other important dimension highlighted in the discussion is the narration of magical power. Magic in most traditional fantasy stories is shown as a means of domination or control, which is frequently used to conquer the foes or establish authority.

Besides, the plot of Unicorn Academy underlines the significance of self-development and self-discovery. The struggles that the characters must deal with usually compel them to address their fears, self-doubt and gain confidence in their talents. Combining narrative and visual storytelling strategies positively contributes to the communicative power of the narrative and proves the promise of multimodal narratives to influence the culture and ethical awareness.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that Unicorn Academy is one of the transformations of the magical school genre in children fantasy literature in the modern era. One of the most important conclusions from the study is that the conception of education in Unicorn Academy is connected to

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some philosophical trends of the present in pedagogics – partnership, understanding, studying of social studies. The other important conclusion of the study is related to the importance of multimodal storytelling in constructing meaning in the narrative. Consequently, the series helps the further development of the fantasy literature of children and demonstrates the probable impact of multimodal narratives on the culture of perception of education, relations, and environmental responsibility.

Findings

This research analysis found out several noteworthy findings about the symbolic representation of magical education, mythological symbolism, and multimodal meaning-making in Unicorn Academy. The other important discovery is the relational nature of learning in the story. Throughout the story, it is repeatedly shown that the emotional connection between students and their unicorn partners is the key to successful magical practice. The other significant discovery is associated with the depiction of magical power. Unicorn Academy introduces magic as something that is a joint and harmonious force, which arises due to the positive relations and balance with the environment. Another aspect that comes from the research is the multimodal meaning making that is brought up in the narrative. Verbal and visual interaction enables the story to bring emotional and thematic messages deeper and clearer. Lastly, the analysis revealed that the story fosters the ideals of inclusivity, diversity, and respect towards each other.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current research shows an in-depth study of Unicorn Academy using the Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory, there are still several opportunities that can be used by future researchers to further elaborate on the results of the current study. The other potential way forward for researchers for future is how multimodal fantasy novels are received by young readers. The current study was conducted on textual and visual analysis but empirical research like survey of readers, interviews or classroom observations can be included in future studies. The use of imaginative storytelling has become more widely adopted among teachers and educators to promote student creativity, emotional development, and critical thinking. Research investigating how fantasy stories can be incorporated into the educational program

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could result in new opportunities to include literature in holistic learning and self-development.

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