

Grammar as meaning-making in context: a language as social semiotic-based approach

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Questions that frame 'grammar in EAP'

- What model of EAP do we have?
- What model of grammar do we have?
- How do we use our knowledge of grammar in EAP?

Questions that frame 'grammar in EAP'

My answers for this presentation

What model of EAP do I have?

- Deploying own repertoire of linguistic and semantic resources in disciplinary meaning making

What model of grammar do I have?

- SFG – language as a social semiotic

How do I use knowledge of grammar in EAP?

- For analysis; pedagogy not directly addressed

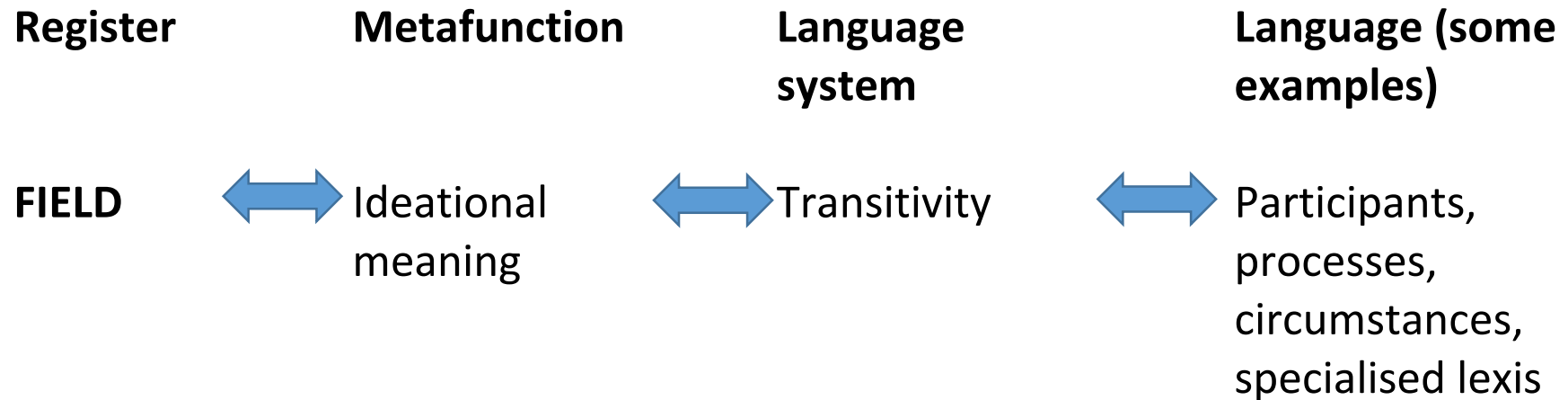
Context-Meaning-Language

Register	Metafunction	Language system	Language (some examples)
FIELD	↔ Ideational meaning	↔ Transitivity	↔ Participants, processes, circumstances, specialised lexis
TENOR	↔ Interpersonal meaning	↔ Mood/Modality	↔ Speech function, modality, evaluation
MODE	↔ Textual meaning	↔ Theme-Rheme, Given-New, Conjunction	↔ Clause structure, exophoric/anaphoric reference, lexical density

Outline

- An example of EAP
- The idea of context
- The idea of meaning making
- How SFG relates language with meaning making in context
- **Ideational metafunction**

Ideational metafunction



Ideational metafunction

Everton's text: Building the field

DOING (Material clause)

Participant (Actor)

Process: material

Participant (Goal)

He (Cage)	puts on	his jeans
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Ideational metafunction

Everton's text: Building the field

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Process: material

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He (Cage)	puts on	his jeans
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Tyrrell's text: Building the field

DOING (Material clause)

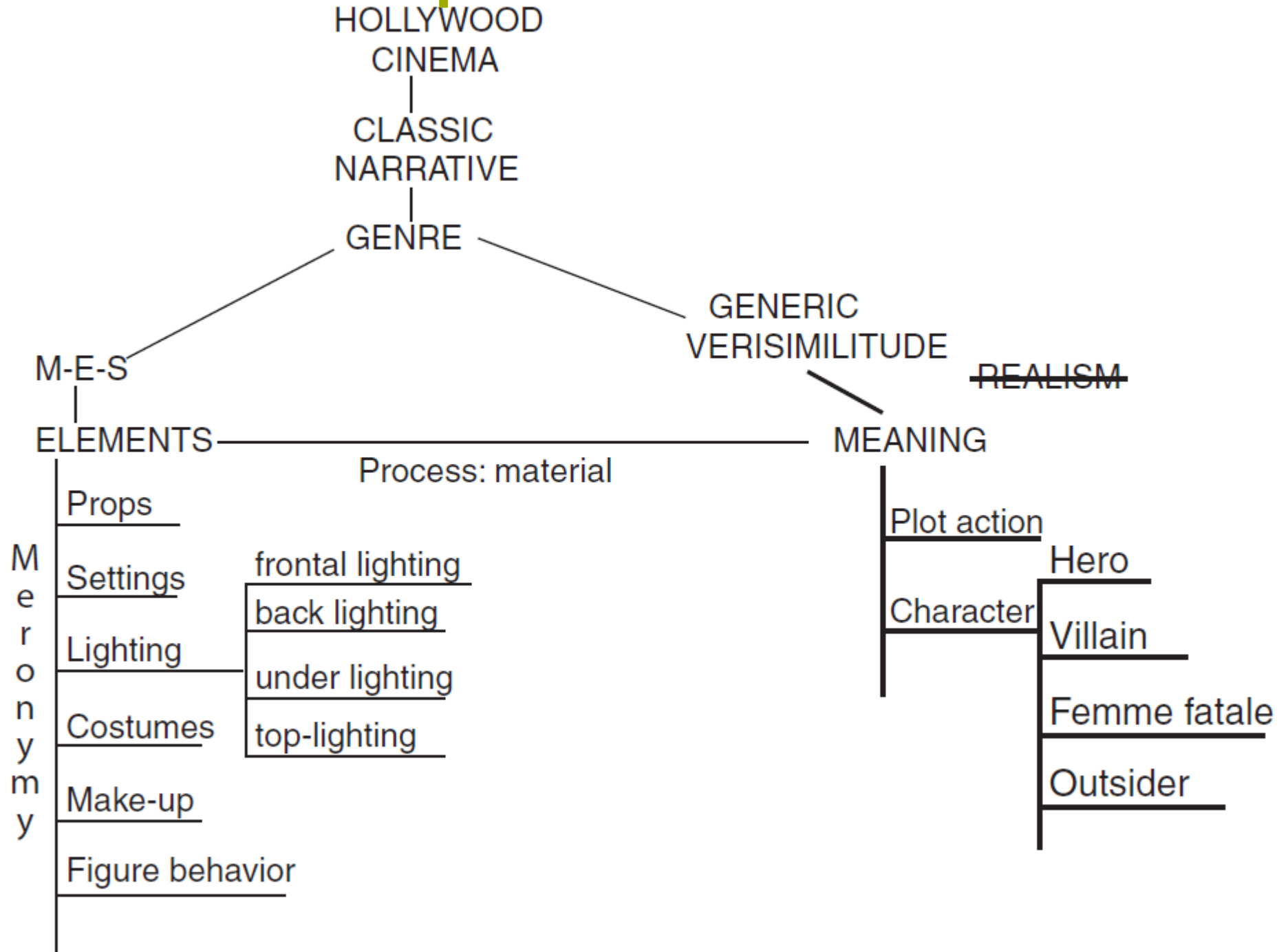
(Participant) Actor

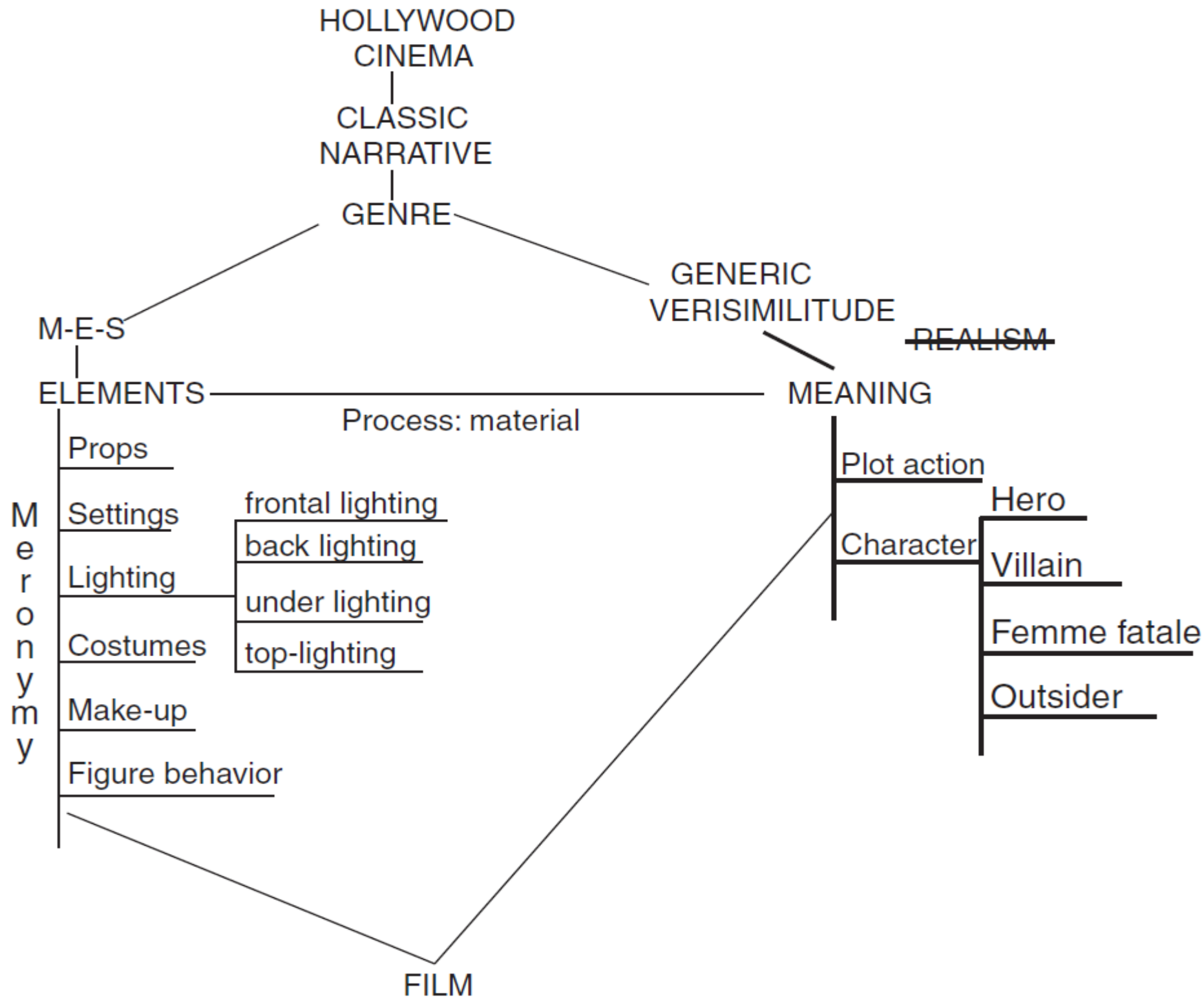
Process :material

(Participant) Goal

Each of the aforementioned elements of mise en scene	can work to construct	meaning
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Conceptual formation





Turning the film into an object of study: hypotactic clause relations: Tyrrell

Element

C3 //When we see /a substantial amount of dollar bills / in Wayne's office//

Subordinate clause (of circumstance:orienting to element in film)

makes meaning

meaning

//it immediately becomes /a visual device conveying meanings connected with crime and misconduct. //

Main clause generalizing about *meaning of element*

Element

C4 It is /a widely recognised and accepted presentation of money in film noir//

Main clause generalizing about element in film

makes meaning

thus aiding generic verisimilitude.

Subordinate clause (of circumstance:expanding on the meaning of the element)

Turning the film into an object of study: Nominal groups: Tyrrell

Element

C3 When we see **/a substantial amount of dollar bills /** in Wayne's office//

Subordinate clause (of circumstance:orienting to element in film)

makes meaning

meaning

it immediately becomes **/a visual device [[conveying meanings [[connected with crime and misconduct.]]]]/**

Main clause – post modified noun with embedded clause (packaging a generalization:
element makes meaning)

Turning the film into an object of study: Nominal groups: Tyrrell

Element

C3 When we see **/a substantial amount of dollar bills /** in Wayne's office//

Subordinate clause (of circumstance:orienting to element in film)

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meaning

it immediately becomes **/a visual device [[conveying meanings [[connected with crime and misconduct.]]]/**

Main clause – post modified noun with embedded clause (packaging a generalization: *element makes meaning*)

Element

C4 It is **/a widely recognised and accepted presentation [of money in film noir]//**

Main clause – pre and post modified noun (grammatical metaphor packaging generalization about element in film)

Turning the film into an object of study: Nominal groups: Tyrrell

Element

C3 When we see **/a substantial amount of dollar bills /** in Wayne's office//

Subordinate clause (of circumstance:orienting to element in film)

makes meaning

meaning

it immediately becomes **/a visual device [[conveying meanings [[connected with crime and misconduct.]]]]/**

Main clause – post modified noun with embedded clause (packaging a generalization: *element makes meaning*)

Element

C4 It is **/a widely recognised and accepted presentation [of money in film noir]//**

Main clause – pre and post modified noun (grammatical metaphor packaging generalization about element in film)

makes meaning

thus aiding **generic verisimilitude.**

Subordinate clause (of circumstance:expanding on the meaning of the element)

Turning the film into an object of study: Clause relations/Nominal groups: Everton

C1 I will be studying and discussing /**the first fifteen minutes [of the film Red Rock West.]**/

Element

C2 The film starts off with /**an establishing shot [of a road [[which disappears into the distance,]]]**//

Meaning

I think this shot was used to give you **the idea [[that it's the middle of nowhere.]]**/

C3 The next shot you see //

the main character, Nicholas Cage, immuring from a bad nights sleep, //

he was sleeping in his car. //

C4 He then starts preparing himself for the₅long day ahead. //

Thematic development: Everton

C3 **The next shot** you see the main character, Nicholas Cage, immuring from a bad nights sleep, he was sleeping in his car.

C5 **He** puts on his jeans then starts doing one handed press ups, this could be none for a couple of reasons.

C6 1) He wants to stay fit

or

C7 2) This shows how he prepares himself for the day ahead (like in Taxi Driver)

C8 **My opinion** is option two.

C9) **The fact that his home is a beaten up rusty Cadillacs and he has a damage leg** also he has no money, life can't be that good for him.

Textual metafunction:macroThemes

Everton's

In this diagnosis I will be answering the question, "In what ways does **mise-en-scene work to construct meaning in film noir**, with particular reference to the first fifteen minutes of **Red Rock West**?". Mise-en-scene originates from the theatre, it is also used for films. Mise-en-scene is everything that is visible within the frame. The main elements of mise-en-scene are the **settings, costumes and make-up, lighting, and figure movement and body language.**

Tyrrell's

Lighting, the shot, setting, location, props and costume are some key **elements of mise-en-scene.** When effectively presented within **the context of the genre**, in this case **film noir**, **each of the aforementioned elements of mise-en-scene can work to construct meaning for the audience.** There are various **cinematic codes** (discussed in this essay) within the genre of film noir that **audiences** can instantly recognise and identify. However, this would not be possible without **the significant contribution that mise en scene makes to aid the narrative of the film by constructing meaning in the visuals.**

Textual metafunction:hyperThemes

Tyrrell [para B]

Costume and props play an essential role in creating **verisimilitude** and conveying different **meanings** within the context of the film's genre, in particular 'country noir'.

[para C]

"Films are also dependent on **props** as a device for conveying **meaning**. In a familiar sense props are **definers of genre**" (Rowe, 1997:101)....

[para F]

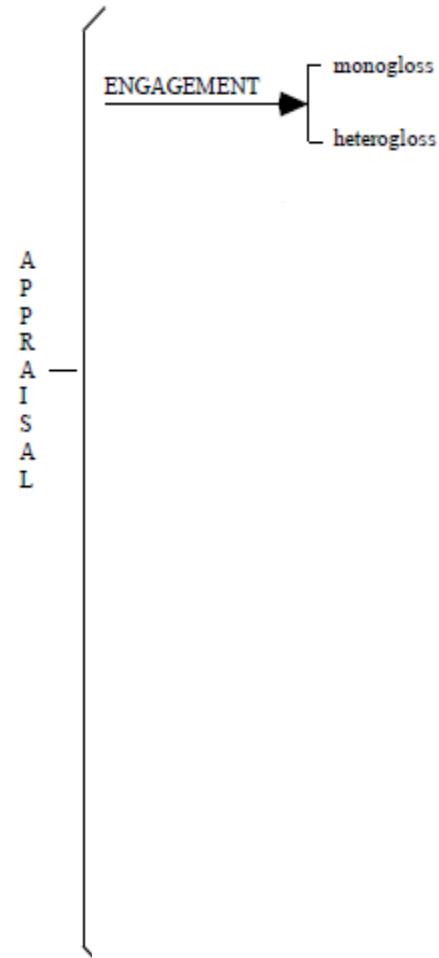
The various **ways in which actors and locations are lit and shot** can instantly convey **meanings** by creating atmosphere and influencing the way a character is perceived.

[para J]

After having meticulously studied the various ways in which ***mise-en-scene*** works to construct meaning in Red Rock West. It can be deduced that the very concept of mise en-scene withholds¹⁸ a significant amount of importance in clearly constructing and conveying meanings to the audience visually.

Element (General-Particular)	Makes	Meaning (General-Particular)
Mise-en-scene	works to construct	meaning
the significant contribution that <i>mise-en-scene</i>	makes to aid	the narrative of the film
Their costumes	visually convey meanings to the audience	about their respective characters
The prop element of mise-en scene in Red Rock West	distinctively works to construct... for the audience.	meaning
The substantial amount of dollar bills	immediately becomes a visual device conveying	meanings connected with crime and misconduct
The various ways in which actors and locations are lit and shot within <i>mise-en-scene</i>	can instantly convey ... to the audience	meanings and messages
Significantly the lighting in the mise en sene of the bar	presents the viewer with	a meaning as to why both characters are lit in such a way.
the very concept of mise en-scene	withholds a significant amount of importance in clearly constructing and conveying ... to the audience visually	meanings

Appraisal resources (the interpersonal metafunction): Engagement



Everton: Modalisation (Engagement)

C2 The film starts off with an establishing shot of a road which disappears into the distance, **I think** this shot was used to give you the idea that it's the middle of nowhere.

C5 ...this could be none for a couple of reasons.

C6 1) He wants to stay fit

or

C7 2) This shows how he prepares himself for the day ahead (like in Taxi Driver)

C8 **My opinion is** option two.

C9 The fact that his home is a beaten up rusty Cadillac and he has a damaged leg also he has no money, life **can't be** that good for him.

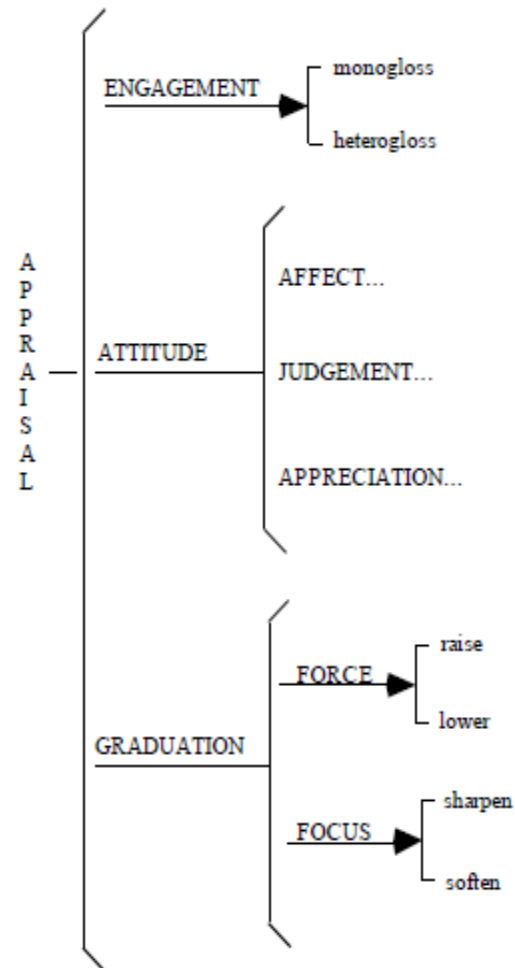
C31 (Next Shot) As the white Cadillac drives past we are shown the location we have just arrived in due to the town sign, which **to me** has two meanings:

D1 **I think** that the *mise-en-scene* was used very well in "Red Rock West".

Tyrrell: Appraisal:Appreciation

- E3 This new genre that Orr has created takes conventions from film noir and the road movie.
- E4 The settings and locations in Red Rock West **correspond with this notion of 'country noir'** the opening scenes instantly present images of small town western America, the **dusty opening** road and the **desert** landscapes.
- E5 The interior of Wayne's bar/saloon **works effectively** in *mise-en-scene* for its narrative context, ...
- F1 The various ways in which actors and locations are lit and shot within *mise-en-scene* can instantly convey meanings and messages to the audience by **creating an atmosphere** and **allowing the audience to read into** certain characters just by the way their images are presented.
- F2 The interior of Wayne's bar only seems to be illuminated by a single source of **dull and opaque** light, possibly **a key light** coming from the exterior through the front door and windows.
- F3 This **chiaroscuro** creates the appearance of **a dim, murky and seedy atmosphere** in the bar creating **low-key lighting** on the character's faces.
- F4 This type of lighting is **appropriate** for the film noir context of the narrative.

Appraisal resources (the interpersonal metafunction): Attitude



Changes in Field building and Textual organisation from Everton's first essay to final essay

	First Essay	Final Essay
TOTAL SENTENCE THEMES	52	64
FILM CHARACTER	47%	1.5%
MES	7%	20%
ELEMENTS	0%	53%
CLAUSE TYPES		
Doing	45%	40%
Being	25%	40%

Changes in grammatical accuracy from Everton's first essay to final essay

	First essay	Final essay
Clause coordination errors (2 main clauses, no coordinating conjunction)	12	22
Clause subordination errors (punctuating of dependent adverbial clauses)	4	3

Changes in grammatical accuracy from Everton's first essay to final essay

	First essay	Final essay
Conjunctions used	and:10; as:7; then:6; but:1; while:1 Errors:3	and:4; as:1; then:0; but:5 ing:8; not only but also:1 due to (=since):1; comparative as:1; when:1; if: 1; by the way:1 Errors: 5
Sentence connectives used	also:2 again:1	also:0; again:0; For example:5 There are three perfect examples: 1 One: 1; The second one:1 Finally, the third:1; This is just one example:1; Another example of this: 1; In this example: 1; By doing this: 1; At this point: 2

Changes in grammatical accuracy from Everton's first essay to final essay

	First essay	Final essay
Subject identification in non-finite clauses errors	0	2
Verb formation errors (Tense/participle inflection)	8	1
Subject Verb agreement errors	3	1
Pronoun reference errors	0	2
Noun with embedded relative clause	Total:12 Errors:4	Total:9 Errors:0

Thank you!

For more information:

- Coffin, C and Donohue, J. (2014) *A language as social semiotic-based approach to teaching and learning in higher education* (Language Learning Monograph Series). Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

OR

- *Language Learning* 64 (Supplement 1).
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