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**“If vegans said the stuff
meat-eaters say”: a social
semiotic perspective of meat-
eaters and vegetarians’
identities taken from a PETA
video ad.**

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“If vegans said the stuff meat-eaters say”: a social semiotic perspective of meat-eaters and vegetarians’ identities taken from a PETA video ad.

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Orientadora: Prof.^a Mônica Souza

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“I have from an early age abjured the use of meat, and the time will come when men such as I will look upon the murder of animals as they now look upon the murder of men.”

Leonardo da Vinci

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Abstract

The research presents a brief discourse analysis of “If vegans said the stuff meat-eaters say”: a sarcastic PETA* video ad in favor of vegetarianism and, most importantly, the animals. Here, the attempt is to show how meat-eaters construct their identities (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004 and 2005; MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) when in conversations with vegans/vegetarians and how the latter have been convincing meat-eaters towards vegetarianism for the animals. For this analysis, this article considered the social semiotic perspective by Halliday (2014) and used the three-pair framework Tactics of Intersubjectivity, by Bucholtz & Hall (2004 and 2005) and the Judgement category of the Appraisal System, by Martin & White (2005). From the use of these theories, it was possible to carry out a more macro analysis of the identity aspects of meat-eaters when trying to defend their points of view. Based on this framework, the data portray the spontaneous, relaxed and unselfconscious way that questions, statements and assumptions are laid out in everyday conversations between vegetarians/vegans and meat-eaters without taking into consideration the veracity of the oral reproductions which have been inculcated in us through established habits and beliefs by the default status and unmarkedness gained by the institutionalized powers of the meat and dairy industries.

* PETA NGO: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Resumo

Esta pesquisa apresenta uma breve análise de um vídeo sarcástico da ONG PETA*: *If vegans said the stuff meat-eaters say* (Se os veganos falassem o que os comedores de carne falam) em favor do vegetarianismo e, especialmente, dos animais. Tentei mostrar como comedores de carne constroem suas identidades (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004 and 2005; MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) quando em conversas com veganos/vegetarianos e como esses últimos têm convencido comedores de carne em prol do vegetarianismo pelos animais. Para esta análise, este artigo considerou a perspectiva semiótica de Halliday (2014), e usou as Táticas de Intersubjetividade, de Bucholtz & Hall (2004 e 2005), e a categoria de Julgamento do Sistema de Avaliatividade, de Martin & White (2005). O uso dessas teorias possibilitou fazer uma análise macro dos aspectos identitários das pessoas que comem carne ao tentarem defender seus pontos de vista. Com base nisso, os dados mostram a forma espontânea e despreocupada que perguntas, declarações e hipóteses acontecem em conversas diárias entre vegetarianos/veganos e comedores de carne sem levar em consideração a veracidade dessas reproduções orais assimiladas através de hábitos e crenças instituídos pela indústria de carne e laticínios, que adquiriu poder e status no decorrer do tempo.

* ONG PETA: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Keywords

Identity Construction, Discourse Analysis, Semiotic Perspective, Tactics of Intersubjectivity, Judgement, Appraisal System, Meat-Eaters, Vegetarianism, Veganism, PETA.

Palavras-chave

Construção de Identidade, Análise do Discurso, Perspective Semiótica, Táticas de Intersubjetividade, Julgamento, Sistema de Avaliatividade, Comedores de Carne, Vegetarianismo, Veganismo, PETA.

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1. Introduction

I have been interested in vegetarianism for at least ten years. Over the past decade, the more I read on vegetarianism, veganism, animal rights and environmental issues, the more enthusiastic I became. Nowadays, I am a vegetarian and I have to say that life has changed for the better as a result.

As a student of the postgraduate course at PUC-Rio, I was fortunate to write an assignment about an ad produced by the NGO PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), which is the largest animal rights organization in the world with more than 6.5 million members and supporters. This NGO is famous for its shocking and offensive ads and I had chosen one that campaigned in favor of veganism. Their moto is: Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way. So, that sparked my enthusiasm in a way that I felt I needed to explore it a little further, academically.

With this in mind, and heart, I have decided to take another look into PETA, but this time through the lens of discourse analysis and identity. I chose a video ad showing amusing and somewhat sarcastic scenes of vegan actors, pretending to be meat-eaters, with the title: If Vegans Said the Stuff Meat-Eaters Say¹.

This analysis is a way of aligning my experience about being a newly vegetarian with further studies I have been doing on identity. The aim is to expand my ability of reflection on a whole new level. Also, my hope is that I am able to achieve new insights into this emerging vegan community around the world by trying to understand the social aspect of the interrelations between established discourses of meat-eaters against the impact of the emerging vegan community.

That being said, my research question is:

¹ See link of the video ad on YouTube: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ikwofGUtYY>>.

Taking into consideration the theories of Language and Identity (DUSZAK, 2008; BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004) and the Appraisal System perspective (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005), how do meat-eaters and vegans/vegetarians construct stereotypical identities of each other in the discursive evaluations?

In order to carry out this investigation and answer this question, this paper is organized into 8 chapters. The Introduction chapter mentions how I decided on the topic and gives some basic information on Vegetarianism and Veganism. Chapter 2 presents the Theoretical Background with a small introduction to Language and Identity (DUSZAK, 2008; BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (HALLIDAY, 2014), followed by the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005). Chapter 3 contains the Methodology section in which I will mention details about the video and specify my role as a researcher. Chapter 4 shows the Analysis of six of the sentences extracted from the transcript with the use of: the three-pair framework within the Relationality Principle (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004 and 2005) for it helps us to understand the identity formation that can be interrelated to markedness, essentialism and institutional power (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004 and 2005), and the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005), more specifically the Judgement category which deals with evaluation of behavior and institutionalized feelings shared by society. The following chapters concern the Final Overview with my final reflections on the topic and the objectives reached, and the Conclusion on how I would complement this research in the future.

1.1 Vegetarianism X Veganism

Basically, vegetarians are people who do not eat any kind of meat. Some societies (religious or not) have adopted vegetarianism for hundreds of years as their main diet, such as the Hinduists, but nowadays we have seen a greater increase of vegetarians and, especially, vegans around the globe².

Vegans, on the other hand, are considered to have “stricter” diets because they abstain from the use of any product derived from animals including meat, dairy, leather, feather, honey, and so on. An updated definition is the one by The Vegan Society³, which says: “veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose.”

The Vegan Society was founded in 1944 by members who objected to eggs and dairy on ethical grounds, differentiating themselves from the vegetarian society of the time. Later, the term “vegan” was extended to include all products derived wholly or partly from animals, including clothing and so on (THE VEGAN SOCIETY).

Although vegans are known for being primarily concerned with animal protection, there might be added reasons for being vegan⁴. First of all, a more plant-based diet has been proven to maintain overall health (CAMPBELL, 2016; ZIMMER et al, 2012), decreasing the chances of heart attack (MACKNIN, 2015; MISHRA, 2013; NAVARRO, 2010; SABATÉ, 1999), cholesterol (WANG, 2015; MISHRA, 2013), obesity (BARNARD, 2005; TURNER-MCGRIEVEY, 2007; NICHOLSON, 1999), diabetes (LI, 2008; BARNARD, 2005, 2006) and cancer (DOS SANTOS SILVA, 2002), just to name a few. Secondly, veganism reduces the impact on the environment if we consider the amount of water and land we need in order to produce meat for the population, among other reasons (DUARTE, 2008; MEAT ATLAS, 2014). Also, veganism aims to “resolve food supply issues; the

² See the research done by The Vegan Society, 2018; IBOPE, 2018.

³ The Vegan Society 70th Anniversary, 2014, p.6 and 7.

⁴ It is important to say that, here, I am considering vegans who follow a well-planned diet (a more plant-based diet which excludes processed food).

foolishness of ‘cycling’ food through animals instead of eating plant food directly” (THE VEGAN SOCIETY).

Equally important for this research is to acknowledge the difference between “health vegetarianism” and “ethical vegetarianism”. “Health vegetarianism” indicates the people who decide to become vegetarians to improve their own health, to prevent or cure diseases. “Ethical vegetarians” take into consideration animal welfare (FOX & WARD, 2008, p. 2585). Within ethical vegetarianism, we find the vegan community⁵.

For this research, I chose to focus on discourse of a video extract from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), the biggest NGO on Animal Rights around the world. They are known for advocating in favor of animals by advertising in various media the shocking, cruel and inhumane way that animals are treated and killed for industrial human consumption.

The discourse analysis proposed here aims at presenting some insights into the understanding of this growing community; an increase that relates to the historical time, social context and changes in population, health and nutritional practices we have been experiencing in the past years. To achieve the purpose of this monograph, the next chapter will provide the Theoretical Background which is the groundwork of this research. I will focus on Identity (DUSZAK, 2008; and BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004 and 2005) and the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) as the tools for the analysis to account for the mandatory changes that we are forced to undertake in favor of the planet. The word *veganism* is the result of that change and the tip of a much bigger iceberg.

⁵ Most vegans follow this lifestyle exclusively to protect the animals. The vegans who keep eating junk food do not get the benefits that the diet can offer. I believe a plant-based diet is also ethical as it excludes animal consumption, but it focus primarily on the diet. However, being a vegan is more of a lifestyle as it seeks to exclude the use of other animal products (clothes, beauty products etc). See the definitions for plant-based diet on: <https://www.forksoverknives.com/plant-based-primer-beginners-guide-starting-plant-based-diet/#gs.Bsd9h7lg>, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5466934/> and <https://nutritionstudies.org/what-is-a-whole-food-plant-based-diet/>. More references about the benefits of a healthy vegan diet is spread throughout this research.

2 Theoretical Background

This chapter is divided into two main sections. First, I write about the relation between Language and Identity (DUSZAK, 2008; and BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004 and 2005), and later about some of the fundamentals of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (HALLIDAY, 2014; EGGINS, 2004), followed by a discussion of the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005), which were used to analyse the discourse in the chosen data (see Chapter 4).

2.1 Language and Identity

I believe no one is self-sufficient and we need to rely on one another if we want to live in society. We are bound to some kind of interdependence in order for society to exist. This is what forces us to interact with one another. Interactions make us realize and/or feel that we are part of certain groups and not part of others. Although it is crucial to have some understanding of our own identity, we constantly, and consciously or not, “build our affiliations and non-alignments” (DUSZAK, 2008, p.1) with different groups of people. Somehow, we feel we identify with certain groups of people either due to more tangible reasons such as age, nationality, color of skin and language or to reasons we acquire or are taught throughout life, such as values, beliefs, style of living, experiences and expectations (DUSZAK, 2008, p.1). So, we either feel we belong to a group because somehow we have always been part of it or we discover ourselves part of a new group as a result of whom we become, as a result of something that changed in us and/or changed our actions as life takes its course. But how does all that happen? According to Duszak (ibid., p. 1), “the construction and management of social identities are done through discourse and by means of various linguistic mechanisms and strategies.”

So, some authors (DUSZAK, 2008; BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004) have been using language to draw upon the aspects of identity, for it is language that plays the major role in the formation of cultural subjectivities. The study of language allows us to analyze not only kinds of speech, but also kinds of speakers who produce and

reproduce particular identities (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, p. 369). The authors go further when they say that the “power relations and social reality play an important role in the production or reproduction of certain identities at a given moment in time, and that the observer’s own perception is just one aspect of the analysis” (ibid., p. 370). Because of that, below, I touch on three concepts which are important for this study as it serves as the basis for my further analysis in Chapter 4: institutional power, unmarkedness, and essentialism.

Bucholtz & Hall (ibid., p. 372) state that “difference implies hierarchy” which leads us to realize that where there is differentiation, there is *power* relation. It is clear that the powerful groups have advantage over other groups, since their identity “gains a special, default status which are usually highly recognizable” (ibid., p. 370) and, because of that, considered “*unmarked*” by society, as they become what is usual or expected (ibid., p. 372). When that happens, it is hard for the mass to question the “norm” for it is the power that establishes the norm and differentiates the rest as subordinate. The power that is masked might go unnoticed.

The same authors (ibid., p. 374) point out that “critics have charged researchers of identity with *essentialism*, a theoretical position that maintains that those who occupy an identity category are both fundamentally similar to one another and fundamentally different from members of other groups”. We should note that identities that are defined by others may be interpreted differently for it refers to an outsider’s point of view. Also, observers may not take into consideration all the intricacies of any given group or community, such as the vegan community, and the infinite “ways in which individuals vary from one another” (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, p. 370), even when belonging to the same group. Taking this research topic as an example, the vegetarian and vegan communities are extremely diverse, containing various subgroups and people who are connected to one another by, at least, one aspect of their lives – vegetarianism. Two of these groups have been identified for the purpose of the analysis in Chapter 4: “health vegetarians” and “ethical vegetarians”, which was explained in Chapter 1 (p. 11). This is an example of the complexities and the dimensions that exist in identity construction, which does not, and cannot, ignore the issues of *culture*, *power* and *agency* (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, p. 382).

There are three pairs of identity formation that can be interrelated to the terms discussed above: *markedness*, *essentialism* and *institutional power* (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, p. 383). Since identity is always dependent on what is going on in relation to the social actors, Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 598) proposed the relationality principle, a three-pair framework for describing the social relations established through semiotic processes – Tactics of Intersubjectivity (See box below). The three pairs are: *adequation and distinction* (similarity and difference), *authentication and denaturalization* (genuineness and artifice), and *authorization and illegitimation* (legitimacy and disempowerment), which can happen in interaction with one another.

Tactics of Intersubjectivity	
Adequation (Similarity)	Distinction (Difference)
Authentication (Genuineness)	Denaturalization (Artifice)
Authorization (Legitimacy)	Illegitimation (Disempowerment)

Table 1 - Three-pair framework by Bucholtz and Hall (2004).

Bucholtz and Hall (2004, p. 382 and 383) explain the meaning of the term Tactics of Intersubjectivity:

We have chosen the word *tactics*, following Certeau (1984/1974), to invoke the local, situated and often improvised quality of the everyday practices through which individuals, though restricted in their freedom to act by externally imposed constraints, accomplish their social goals. Our second term, *intersubjectivity*, is meant to highlight the place of agency and interactional negotiation in the formation of identity. As with *tactics*, however, we wish to emphasize the limits that are placed on social agency, a tension that is captured in the polysemy of *subject* as both the agent and the patient of social action.

Taking the first pair of tactics, *adequation and distinction*, where the first reveals that even though groups or individuals are considered alike, they are not identical, but simply sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes (ibid., 2005, p. 599), which may or may not occur accompanied by *solidarity*. To give an example, even within the vegetarian movement, there might be cases where

solidarity may not exist since we see some vegans who find vegetarians selfish for thinking solely on their health (FOX & WARD, 2008). That leads to the word *Distinction* which involves partiality (sufficient difference), but it demonstrates how difference is produced by society, groups or individuals as a strategy for domination; building a dichotomy of *us* versus *them* (ibid. 2004, p. 384).

In the present study, some of the dichotomies that can be perceived are, for example:

- humans versus animals - the control we have over the animals, “who”⁶ cannot defend themselves and depend on humans to have a voice. And last but not least, we forget that we are also part of the animal kingdom of this planet;
- meat-eaters versus vegetarians/vegans – the unmarked identity of the meat and dairy industries which influence the majority of society and the rapid growth of the vegetarianism and vegan communities who try to expose the drawbacks of a diet based on meat and dairy;
- health vegetarians versus ethical vegetarians – it is clear that PETA is concerned over making people become vegans exclusively for the animals, but for that, they may take all kinds of routes⁷;

According to Bisogni et al (2002), “vegetarianism is not only a cognitive or expressive response to food, but it is also an embodied practice that can act as cue to identity”. So, adopting a vegetarian diet means belonging to a new ideological position in society. Also, within vegetarianism, one will find the subgroup which best characterizes their choices. Is this person a vegan or vegetarian? If vegan, does he/she follow a whole-food plant-based diet⁸? Does one decide to become a vegetarian or a vegan for health, environmental or animal welfare reasons? Or all together? For Fox & Ward (2008, p. 2587), “diet and identity are mutually constitutive, with identities both derived from and influenced by dietary choices”.

⁶ I have decided to use “who” as they are individuals.

⁷ See more on <https://www.peta.org/>.

⁸ See definition of a Whole-Food Plant-Based Diet on: <https://www.forksoverknives.com/plant-based-primer-beginners-guide-starting-plant-based-diet/#gs.Bsd9h7lg>, <https://nutritionstudies.org/what-is-a-whole-food-plant-based-diet/>, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5466934/>.

The second pair of tactics, *authentication and denaturalization*, concerns the processes where identities count as ‘real’ or not and therefore come to register particular ways of being through the use of language choice (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, p. 385). *Authentication* refers to how speakers activate essentialist readings in the articulation of identity through the social process played out in discourse (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, p. 386; 2005, p. 601). On the other hand, *denaturalization* is concerned with “artificiality and non-essentialism of identity” and “it frequently operates to destabilize the essentialist claims enacted by authentication” (ibid.).

One example is the fact that although the vegan community is not static; it functions as a whole and that can be perceived in the way they relate to meat-eaters in discourse (see Chapter 4). There is a relatively stable sense of self, of belonging to one community. At the same time, being vegan is simply one of the choices that makes up one’s life as human, together with all the other intricacies of their personal history and background. Therefore, people “carry” an infinite number of identities, and that is also never static. This is the reason why there should be caution when making generalizations as individualized analysis also exists.

On the same note, we may recognize that “sameness and difference do not exist apart from ideologies and practices through which they are constructed” (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, p. 388). As a result, if sameness and difference have been constructed by individuals according to their own interests, we should be able to identify when language is being used to impact positively or negatively a certain society, or the world.

To exemplify, PETA has been doing that very successfully when they use discourse, and other semiotic systems⁹, in favor of animal rights. Their important message permeates everything they do. This message is to state that “it is only prejudice that allows us to deny others the rights that we expect to have ourselves (SINGER, 1995). Whether it is based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or species, prejudice is morally unacceptable.” Without the hard work of this worldwide NGO, it would be quite challenging to educate people about the “normalization of the

⁹ See page 20 on semiotic systems, paragraph 3.

unthinkable”. According to PETA’s founder, Ingrid Newkirk, it is never too late to give up prejudices and it only takes compassion and will.¹⁰ By that, we see that there is a growing effort to authenticate a new ideological way of thinking and acting in the world in opposition to the already established and authenticated discourses that meat-eaters are used to, which were implemented by the meat and dairy industries through ads.

The third pair of tactics, *authorization and illegitimation*, considers an institutionalized power as responsible for the formation of an identity (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, p. 386). While *authorization* may occur through linguistic standardization, and strategic use of linguistic markers of expertise; *illegitimation* is the process of denying power and occurs in order “to support or undermine hegemonic authority”.

This last pair of tactics can be exemplified by the hegemonic power of the meat and dairy industries which use discourse to control the market, not worried about the moral stance whether the information on the media and stamped on their products is right or not, considering there are recent studies showing the disadvantages of an omnivore diet (CAMPBELL, 2016; WANG, 2015; MACKNIN, 2015; MEAT ATLAS, 2014; MISHRA, 2013; ZIMMER et al, 2012). So, the industry decides on how they control their market and purposely deviates from the truth to do it.

To correlate the theory mentioned above with the topic of this paper, the vegan community has been challenging the “unmarked” and “status quo” identity of meat eaters in many Western societies, which has shaken all the suppositions fostered by the meat industry over the years. This is being helped by the non-sponsored research papers¹¹ which prove the higher benefits of the vegan diet¹² and also the scientific evidence that shows that more vegans would mean fewer environmental problems and more food on a planetary level (CAMPBELL, 2016; WANG, 2015; MACKNIN, 2015; MEAT ATLAS, 2014; MISHRA, 2013;

¹⁰ Extracted from her speech at the 2015 Animal Rights National Conference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4FSgNv5Vik>.

¹¹ Taking into consideration that the meat and dairy industries sponsor many of the research done in universities, which leads to biased results.

¹² Well-planned vegan diet such as the plant-based diet, as explained in chapter 1.

ZIMMER et al, 2012; NAVARRO, 2010; LI, 2008; BARNARD, 2006, 2005; NICHOLSON, 1999; SABATÉ, 1999; TURNER-MCGRIEVY, 2007; DOS SANTOS SILVA, 2002). Together with the Animal Rights activism, this new community has challenged the reproduction of the powerful identity once in place. At first, it was considered an inconvenient truth, but now it appears to be quite impossible to ignore. These two identities – meat-eaters and vegans – appear to go through rapid changes.

If some time ago meat meant status and power (FIDDES, 1991), in my view, nowadays, to be identified as a meat eater means being associated with animal slaughter, environmental destruction and poor health. If some time ago veganism was for the hippies, nowadays, to be identified as a vegan means taking charge of the changes we want to see in ourselves and in society such as having a healthier diet which excludes animals, and suffering, and which helps the environment. However, we continue to see that the Western culture still normalizes meat eating due to strong habits, for example. Also, this lies on the fact that the dominant ideology supporting meat consumption has been described as invisible because these beliefs are commonly perceived as default (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004; TWIGG, 1983; JOY, 2011). So, what we say and how we interact show our values and beliefs to other people. But what we eat can also be the source of political action in the sense that being vegan, nowadays, is a way of rejecting the default identity of the dominant group, and more importantly, a way of challenging the social power structures, here being the meat and dairy industries.

Today, there are numerous researchers studying different aspects of veganism, and the most common topics are Meat X Masculinity / Carnism (TWIGG, 1983; JOY, 2011), Oppression of Animals X Oppression of Women by Patriarchal Structures (ADAMS, 2015), Meat Consumption X Human Power (FIDDES, 1991), Animal Rights, just to name a few. The study of identity has also been used by researchers of various fields (DUSZACK, 2008; BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004) who are interested in investigating the power relations of certain groups and the main themes have been: sexism, racism, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

In this paper, I will use the perspective of identity construction (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004; DUSZAK, 2008) together with the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) in order to begin to understand the recent emergence of a group and the impact it has had over *the status quo* group: meat-eaters. The aim here is to analyse how vegans and meat-eaters construct each other's identities through discourse. But before we examine these two group identities in detail, I would like to move on to a short description of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (HALLIDAY, 2014), of which the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) is part.

2.2 Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL)

If we start by reading the title of the video on YouTube: **“If Vegans Said the Stuff Meat-Eaters Say”**, our first impression might be of a sarcastic view of vegans' responses to meat-eaters. But where do we get this idea from? We may deduce the context by interpreting not only the textual resources, but also the ideational and interpersonal resources. Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) focuses on the relationship between language and context and, I will use the interpersonal metafunction: how social relations are being negotiated through the use of language and context. In order to clarify this, I cite Eggins, who said (2004, p. 9):

Our ability to deduce context from text, to predict when and how language use will vary, and the ambiguity of language removed from its context, provide evidence that in asking functional questions about language we must focus not just on language, but on language use in context.

Michael Halliday (2014), the key developer of SFL, gave great emphasis on the meaning of language in use in the textual processes of social life (EGGINS, 2004, p. 2). And simply by reading the title of the video under analysis, we can realize that there was a negotiation of texts in order to make meanings; that language was structured in a way to serve an objective (see Chapter 4). That is why, in order

to realize the context, Halliday (2014) stressed the importance of understanding the social structure and social change behind the language being used.

A way of analyzing the identities is through SFL, more specifically by means of the *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual* metafunctions of language (Fig. 1, p. 21). Although my investigation focuses on the interpersonal metafunction, I will start by summarizing the three metafunctions, as follows.

The Ideational relates to the experience. It is what is happening, to whom and in what circumstances. The Interpersonal relates to understanding the participants and the interactions that happen. The Textual is connecting language both ideationally and interpersonally in a coherent and cohesive text. So, at any one time, we are representing our internal and external world, in social exchanges with others, getting things done, and organizing all of this into a coherent and cohesive way, all at once (HALLIDAY, 2014).

The terms Context of Culture (related to Genre) and Context of Situation (related to Register) are also important for the understanding of the analysis in Chapter 4.

According to Halliday (2014, p. 33), Context of Culture is defined by all the genres which involve the interactions and exchanges that occur within a culture through the use of semiotic systems such as language, paralanguage and other systems of meanings (dance, drawing, painting and so on) (ibid., p. 33).

In contrast, Context of Situation refers to the social context categories of field, tenor and mode as register (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005, p. 27), or the immediate context in which language is used. It can also be said that Context of Situation is within Context of Culture in a dynamic, supervenient relation.

The three metafunctions can also be related to the three aspects of the Context of Situation: Field, Tenor and Mode. Field is what is happening, to whom, where, when and why, Tenor is the social relation that is enacted and Mode is the way language is used in any kind of interaction. These correlations are outlined in the picture below (p. 21).

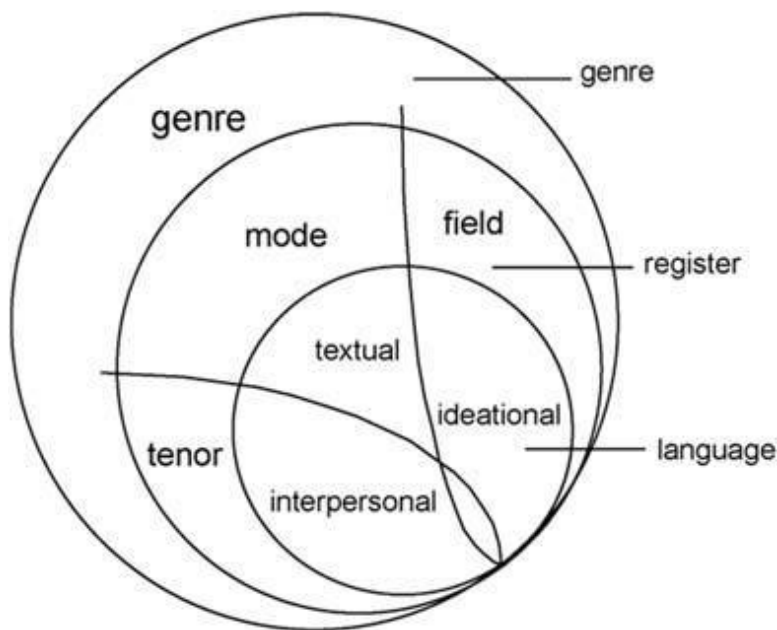


Figure 1 - Metafunctions in relation to field, mode and tenor. (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005).

Taking the topic of this research, for instance, the characteristics and the nature of what is happening (the sarcastic PETA video) represent the Field; the roles played by the actors, combined with the institutions and status they relate to, represent the Tenor, and the semiotic and social systems in use towards Tenor (persuasive, sarcastic) represent Mode and construct Field (HALLIDAY, 2014, p. 34). According to Halliday (1978), the roles and statuses of the participants make up what he calls Tenor, which includes any kind of temporary or permanent relationship, the speech roles that come up and all the social relationships in which the participants are involved. Poynton (1985) goes further to point out that “we can identify power and solidarity as two key tenor variables – the vertical and horizontal dimensions of interpersonal relations”. My idea in mentioning that here is because this principle “affects who can express feelings and who can’t, what kinds of feelings are expressed, how strongly they are expressed, and how directly they are sourced” (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005, p. 30) and this can be applied to my data (see chapter 4), as follows.

Only now has veganism been allowed to spread their voice, after scientific research showed all the benefits of the vegan lifestyle not only for one's health¹³ (CAMPBELL, 2016; LI, 2008; BARNARD, 2005, 2006; TURNER-MCGRIEVEY, 2007, 2014; MISHRA, 2013; MACKNIN, 2015), but also for the environment (DUARTE, 2008; MARLOW 2009; MEAT ATLAS 2014). I believe that, if that had not happened, we almost certainly would not have seen such a dramatic change in people's opinions and behavior. In my view, there is no reason in defending something that does not serve any good. So, we can see that finally the vegan community can express feelings and facts, and the way they are doing that is impressive (see chapter 4). Before, they might have tried, but nobody would listen. Not enough research had been done. These recent discoveries are proof that nothing is static and that the meat-eater identity is being questioned as a result of these changes.

Here, my objective, in line with Martin and White, is to treat appraisal as a discourse semantic resource, which is deployed to construe power/disempowerment and solidarity/non-solidarity (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005, p. 32) as a means to understand the social relations that exist between vegans and meat-eaters. For this reason, more on the Appraisal System will be dealt with below.

2.2.1 Appraisal System

The Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) aims to understand the author's attitude and how texts relate to a potential or real reader or listener. For linguists, appraisal is an interpersonal system, at the level of discourse semantics, which articulates itself with two other systems: negotiation (interactive aspects of discourse, speech function and exchange structure) and involvement (non-gradable resources for negotiating tenor relations, such as solidarity) (Ibid, 2005, p. 33).

¹³ Considering a well-planned vegan diet, as explained before in chapter 1.

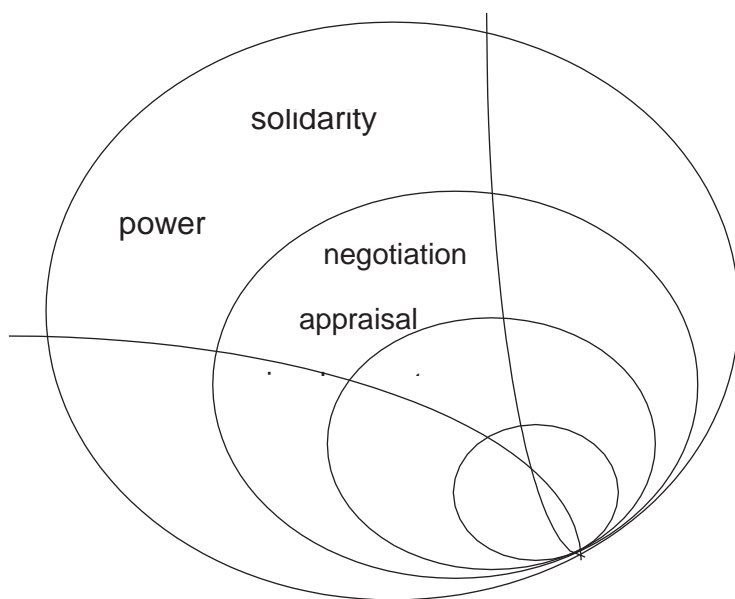


Figure 2 - Interpersonal semantic systems and tenor variables. (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005).

The Appraisal System consists of three interacting domains: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation (MARTIN & WHITE, 2015, p. 35). “Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behavior and evaluation of things. Engagement deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. Graduation attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred.” (ibid.)

Affect, Judgement and Appreciation are the subdivisions of Attitude. Affect being characterized by emotion – emotional reactions. Judgement is concerned with assessing human behavior taking into consideration social norms. Appreciation is the assessment of things (phenomena and semiosis – product or process). All these three domains can be assessed as positive and negative.

Engagement is described by Martin and White (2005, p. 36) as concerned with the resources, such as projection, modality, polarity, concession and various comment adverbials, through which a text comes to express, negotiate and naturalize particular inter-subjective and ultimately ideological positions.

Graduation attends as a way of “adjusting the degree of an evaluation” (ibid. p. 37) and that can be characterized as “force” (raise or lower) or “focus” (sharpen or soften). See Figure 3 (p. 24) below:

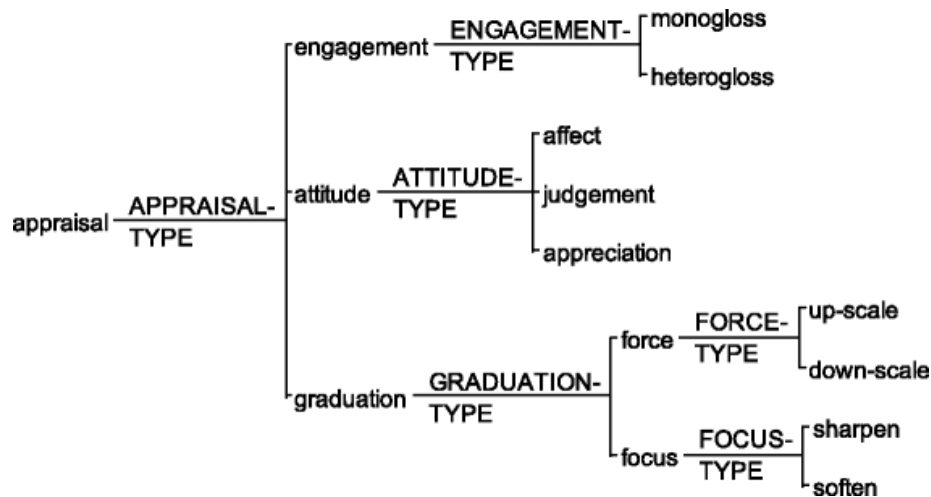


Figure 3 - An overview of Appraisal resources (Adapted from MARTIN & WHITE – 2005).

This paper will focus on the attitudinal subdivision of Judgement, since the nature of my data allows me “to evaluate feelings in the realm of proposals about behavior” (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005, p. 45). My attempt will be to mention how judgements of social esteem and judgements of social sanction appear in my data (See table on p. 25). Judgements of Social Esteem have “to do with ‘normality’ (how unusual someone is), ‘capacity’ (how capable they are) and ‘tenacity’ (how resolute they are)” whereas Judgements of Social Sanction “have to do with ‘veracity’ (how truthful someone is) and ‘propriety’ (how ethical someone is) (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005, p. 52). So judgement will deal with ethics, morality, evaluation of behavior and institutionalized feelings, which are shared by society.

JUDGEMENT
Social Esteem (Criticism)
Normality - How unusual/special is someone? Capacity - How capable are they? Tenacity - How resolute/dependable are they?
Social Sanction (Condemnation)
Veracity - How truthful/honest is someone? Propriety - How ethical is someone?/ How far beyond reproach?

Table 2 - Appraisal System: Judgement (Social Esteem and Social Sanction).

In chapter 4, we will see how the meat-eaters are portrayed in the video. The actors ‘force’ some feelings on the viewer with the purpose of institutionalizing new proposals for a new society. They do that by making the viewer inquire about the information given to make them realize who is ‘right’. The way they convey the overall message, through sarcasm from beginning to end, might be interpreted that there is a shift they want to make from Social Esteem to Social Sanction, making the meat-eater feel guilty and condemned by society. Chapter 4 will show how this is done.

Before that, the next chapter will deal with the methodology, which will describe my role as a researcher and will give more details about my data.

3 Methodology

Veganism has been comprehensively studied by researchers of various fields (BARNARD, 2005, 2006; TURNER-MCGRIEVEY, 2007, 2014; MISHRA, 2013; MACKNIN, 2015; DUARTE, 2008; FOX & WARD, 2008). As a result, we see a myriad of methods and paradigms of choice being used by researchers. Here, I am going to base my research on the constructivist paradigm (GUBA & LINCOLN, 1994) and, being an interpretivist investigation (MOITA LOPES, 1994), I will support a qualitative method (GUBA & LINCOLN, 1994) for it is the one which looks forward to the understanding of contexts to approach reality, since reality may depend on various factors. More details on this will be described below.

Qualitative methods are usually supported by interpretivists because for us reality is socially constructed. Experiences cannot be either measured/quantified or fixed, and for this reason, I cannot follow a quantitative method and a positivist or post-positivist paradigm¹⁴. My data values different realities, as there is no search for a right or wrong answer to a question. My objective is simply examining human behavior through discourse and through what I perceive being a vegetarian and a researcher.

Here, the methodological principle in use is Ontology as it is concerned with how the reality is conceived and how we perceive ourselves (GUBA & LINCOLN, 1994, p. 108). Here, as a researcher, I want to understand which realities the participants may be creating, at that moment, for themselves and for the viewer, and how they did that. It will also be a way of gaining insight into the realities (backgrounds, beliefs and experiences) portrayed in the video, such as the identity construction of each group – vegans and meat-eaters.

You will be able to find more about the data on the next section.

¹⁴ Positivists and post-positivists focus on efforts to verify or falsify a priori hypotheses stated as quantitative propositions that can be easily converted into precise mathematical formulas expressing functional relationships (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106).

3.1 The Data

The data was taken from a YouTube video which shows PETA (see Chapter 1/ 1.1) actors criticizing meat-eaters' responses to veganism. For access to the video on YouTube, check link below:



Figure 4 – Print screen of the beginning of the video on YouTube.

Link: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ikwofGUtYY>>.

The PETA channel on YouTube has over four hundred thousand subscribers and this two-minute video alone reached over seven hundred thousand views since 2015, the year it was posted.

Another point to mention is the content of the comments under the video. By September 2018, almost nine hundred people had written comments on specific parts of the discourse. Certainly, this would make another monograph by itself.

A further examination on this subsection is about the content of the video, which is also connected to the data. By the title of the video alone, “**If Vegans Said the Stuff Meat-Eaters Say**”, we can see that the NGO uses humor and sarcasm in order to convey their message. Persuasive techniques are used in order to intensify the argumentation. That is done through the intonation, the choice of content and

the exchange of the identities' roles, having the vegans pretending 'to say the stuff meat-eaters say'. These choices were made on purpose to unveil the way meat-eaters speak, simply out of convention or habit, without any kind of background knowledge (See Chapter 4).

Even though the *texts*¹⁵ to be analyzed do not show people interacting in naturally-occurring social contexts, since it is a video scene produced by an NGO with actors, the *text* extracts are transcripts of the authentic and very common speech that occurs between vegans and meat-eaters in Western culture. The video presents vegans telling stories, asking questions, making assumptions or statements while talking to meat-eaters¹⁶. These conversations portray quite well the spontaneous, relaxed and unselfconscious way these assumptions come up in everyday life. Even though, this video can be quite amusing for any viewer, it brings an important message: we are strongly influenced by beliefs and we may respond automatically without considering the constant change of realities (See Chapter 4).

I have decided to focus my analysis on the *meaning* of the actual transcript rather than the "raw" data, which means the actual transcript, without any interpretation. Below, I show both what they really say and what they mean, considering the viewer is a meat-eater.

"Raw" Data	Implied Meaning
"Where do you get your fiber?"	<u>"Where do you get your protein?"</u>
"Did you know that Hitler ate meat?"	<u>"Did you know that Hitler was a vegetarian?"</u>
"Do you think that eating meat is just like a phase you're going through?"	<u>"Do you think being a vegetarian is just like a phase you're going through?"</u>

¹⁵ "Text" referring to a complete linguistic interaction, spoken or written, preferable from beginning to end. (EGGINS, p. 5, 2004).

¹⁶ See video transcript in the Annex.

“I bet you'd be healthier if you didn't eat any meat.”	<u>“I bet you'd be healthier if you ate meat.”</u>
“I think it's really expensive to eat meat.”	<u>“I think it is really expensive to be a vegetarian.”</u>
“You don't look like a meat-eater at all!”	<u>“You don't look like a vegetarian at all!”</u>

Table 3 - "raw" data and meanings.

3.2 Analysis Procedure

The analysis will revolve around Tactics of Intersubjectivity (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, 2005) and the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) (See chapter 2), more specifically the attitudinal subsystem of Judgement, that is “judgements of behavior” (ibid.).

I have chosen Tactics of Intersubjectivity (See box below on p. 29) because it relates to the negotiation that happens in interactions which results in the construction of identities. So, this evaluation entails identifying the formation of identities due to group backgrounds, beliefs, habits, and experiences.

Tactics of Intersubjectivity	
Adequation (Similarity)	Distinction (Difference)
Authentication (Genuineness)	Denaturalization (Artifice)
Authorization (Legitimacy)	Illegitimation (Disempowerment)

Table 4 - Framework of Tactics of Intersubjectivity.

As it was explained in the Theoretical Background chapter, Judgement is one of the three regions of feelings described by Martin and White (ibid., 2005, p. 35)

and is “concerned with resources for assessing behavior according to normative principles” (ibid.). So, my aim here will be to evaluate selected video extracts considering not only who produces the utterances, but the impact they try to convey to the target viewer: the meat-eaters. Having chosen the Judgement category, I will need to evaluate the language and lexicogrammatical structures used (by PETA) to criticize and condemn the behavior of the meat-eaters under the moral, ethical and legal understandings of the society of the 21st century.

One final consideration to make is my role as a researcher, as it cannot be of neutrality, since I observe the world through a perspective of class, gender, race, culture and community (QUIRINO, 2015, p. 67). As a result, when I use the attitudinal subsystem of Judgement to analyse my data, I am influenced by all these perspectives, to say the least. In chapter 4, I will consider the human behavior, who is judging and who is being judged, according to the Judgement category of the Appraisal System.

The box below (p. 31) shows what I will take into consideration when using Judgement for the analysis. The point here is to evaluate people’s attitudes and behaviors by using the subdivisions of Judgement: Judgement of Social Esteem and Judgement of Social Sanction. According to Martin & White (2005) Social Esteem has to “do with ‘normality’ (how unusual someone is), ‘capacity’ (how capable they are) and ‘tenacity’ (how resolute they are). Social Sanction has to “do with ‘veracity’ (how truthful someone is) and ‘propriety’ (how ethical someone is).”

Social Esteem deals with not only the habitual utterances that happen in social environments, but also with evaluations (criticism/admiration) and sharing of values. In this research, we see that the author of the text chose to use humor in order to send the message of criticism.

Social Sanction category is more related to a broader aspect of the matter, which will be exemplified in Chapter 4. I mean “broader” because the video forces the feeling of guilt on the viewer and takes vegetarianism as something that must be followed in observance of a better society. For PETA, it is our duty to become vegetarians and society must be informed of the ridicule of a meat-eating diet. So, PETA acts as the state in order to tell you what to do. They always try to find a

lever to persuade people in favor of the animal welfare. For them, sharing values underpins duty and observances in favor of a cruelty-free animal life. Having said that, let's begin the analysis.

JUDGEMENT
Social Esteem (Criticism)
Normality - How unusual/special is someone? Capacity - How capable are they? Tenacity - How resolute/dependable are they?
Social Sanction (Condemnation)
Veracity - How truthful/honest is someone? Propriety - How ethical is someone?/ How far beyond reproach?

Table 5 - Framework of Judgment.

4 Analysis

After going through the Theoretical Background and the Methodology (Chapter 2 and 3), I embark onto the analysis of the video extracts on veganism. As previously mentioned, this data analysis aims at identifying how vegans and meat-eaters position themselves in society, and to do that, I set out this journey by using the study on Identity, the Relationality Principle (Tactics of Intersubjectivity) (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, 2005) and the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005), more specifically, the attitudinal subsystem of Judgment (*ibid.*), as explained in chapter 2. However, before the micro analysis, I have first decided to go beyond isolated sentences, and focus on the understanding of the broader aspects of the video.

Going back to what was laid out in previous chapters about the data, the target viewers (meat-eaters) are led to realize their own discomfort with the institution's positioning of heavy criticism. In order to reach this goal, PETA used language, paralinguistic (loudness, facial expression, gesture, bodily stance) and existing modes of communication (image, music, movement) all in favor of veganism. Each and every scene, or story, serves to corroborate the meat-eaters' behavior, excuses and ignorance when interpreting veganism through their own eyes. As groups of meanings accumulate throughout the video, we see that the objective of the campaign is established by giving emphasis to the bigger context: firstly, the animal rights movement; secondly, the growth of veganism due to health and environmental reasons.

Also, PETA tries to show that meat-eaters' assumptions are not only related to people's habits, but first to their beliefs; which could be claimed to have been largely influenced by the meat and dairy industries (eg.: such as the belief that a person who eats "only" vegetables does not take enough protein or looks unhealthy¹⁷) over the years. So, there is a dynamic relation between habits and beliefs. It is interesting to notice that the video does not show the participants' replies in the conversation, which implies a non-negotiable behavior on the part of

¹⁷ PLANT PROTEIN PREFERABLE. <https://nutritionfacts.org/video/plant-protein-preferable/>. Website accessed on: 30th of September, 2018.

PETA. The aim here is clearly to convey how meat-eaters behave and react when somebody says that he or she is vegan by imposing on the target-viewer the ‘ridicule’ of the matter.

I have decided to focus my analysis on the *meaning*¹⁸ of the actual transcript rather than the “raw”/actual data. You need to go beyond the sentence in order to interpret it. What I mean by the word “beyond” is that you need to know some background information in order to understand the real meaning of all (text and context). Below, I show both what the actors really say and what they mean, considering the viewer is a meat-eater. It is important to say that the analysis takes a macro perspective standpoint, for it is the sarcasm and humor which enabled me to draw interpretations from the context rather than a closer focus on the lexicogrammatical items or the text itself. The Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) is used for its prosodic realization since “the meaning is distributed like a prosody throughout a continuous stretch of discourse” (HALLIDAY, 2014).

¹⁸ It is important to say that the “implied meaning” has to do with my own experiences considering I am part of this community as a vegetarian. In order to help you understand how I got to these conclusions, check the references below:

PRAST, H. M. A behavioral economics approach to food consumption. Meat the Truth. 2015.
ANDERSEN, Kip; KUHN, Keegan. Cowspiracy: The sustainability secret. AUM Films NS First Spark Media, 2014.

BEFORE THE FLOOD. Trailer available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9xFFyUOpXo>. Website accessed on 18th of January, 2019.

CAMPBELL, T. Colin; CAMPBELL II, Thomas M. The China Study: Revised and Expanded Edition: The Most Comprehensive Study of Nutrition Ever Conducted and the Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss, and Long-Term Health. BenBella Books, Inc., 2016.

DUARTE, Ilka de Sousa. Impactos ambientais da produção de carne para consumo humano: a indústria da carne na contramão da tutela constitucional do meio ambiente. 2008. 117 p. Monografia (Graduação em Direito) – Faculdade de Direito do Recife, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, 2008.

GORE, Al. An inconvenient truth: The planetary emergency of global warming and what we can do about it. Rodale, 2006.

H.O.P.E. What we eat matters. Available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOYHjPHm-Sc>. Website accessed on: 18th January, 2018.

MARLOW, Harold J. et al. Diet and the environment: does what you eat matter? The American journal of clinical nutrition, 2009.

MEAT ATLAS. Facts and figures about the animals we eat. Heinrich Boll Foundation and Friends of the Earth Europe. 2014. Available on:

https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/meat_atlas2014_kommentierbar.pdf. Website accessed on: 21st of July, 2018.

RACING EXTINCTION. Available On: <https://racingextinction.com/film/>. Website accessed 18th of January, 2018.

SHIVA, Vandana. Staying alive: Women, ecology, and development. North Atlantic Books, 2016.

“Raw” Data	Implied Meaning
“Where do you get your fiber?”	<u>“Where do you get your protein?”</u>
“Did you know that Hitler ate meat?”	<u>“Did you know that Hitler was a vegetarian?”</u>
“Do you think that eating meat is just like a phase you're going through?”	<u>“Do you think being a vegetarian is just like a phase you’re going through?”</u>
“I bet you'd be healthier if you didn't eat any meat.”	<u>“I bet you’d be healthier if you ate meat.”</u>
“I think it's really expensive to eat meat.”	<u>“I think it is really expensive to be a vegetarian.”</u>
“You don't look like a meat-eater at all!”	<u>“You don’t look like a vegetarian at all!”</u>

Table 6 - "raw" data and meanings.

For more information about the entire transcript, check the Annex.

As I said before, I will be evaluating the sentences which are the reverse of what was actually said on the video. So, the analysis will focus on each of the sentences shown on the right side of the box above, which shows the implied meanings conveyed by the selected sentences from the video.

4.1 Sentence 1

“Where do you get your protein?”

One of the many questions which emerges when somebody says they are vegan or vegetarian is “Where do you get your protein?” For the speaker, this question seems to be quite reasonable and normal, but it takes on a completely different interpretation for the vegan listener. For the vegan, this question reveals a lot about the other person, apart from it being simply an instance of *Judgement of Social Esteem* (Chapter 2) on somebody’s diet, even though it looks more like a statement (with no need to question it). This question is an indicative that the one who asks reveals to be more knowledgeable about diet in general which may be related to the construction of an identity which became powerful and, as a consequence, has acquired authority and status.

This extract portrays a negative *Judgement of Normality (Social Esteem)*, which states that because somebody is vegan, he or she ‘cannot’ be having ‘enough’ protein. For the speaker, it appears that meat is the only source of protein, which has already been proven wrong.¹⁹ So, when the meat-eater asks this question, he is implying that it ‘cannot be normal’ to be vegan and, at the same time, get enough protein in the diet.

Since identity is dependent on what is going on in relation to the social actors (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2005, p. 598), we can mention here the tactics of intersubjectivity of *Authentication* and *Denaturalization*, which concerns the processes where identities count as ‘real’ or not (Chapter 2). Taking this research topic as an example, it is easy to recognize that there is a *default status* which becomes *unmarked* for it is so powerful that makes people not even question what is going on. The meat and dairy industries continue to protect and consider

¹⁹ If you are well-read on the matter, you would know that protein can be found in **better** sources such as legumes.

<https://nutritionfacts.org/video/plant-protein-preferable/>

<https://nutritionfacts.org/video/the-protein-combining-myth/>

<https://nutritionfacts.org/video/animal-protein-compared-cigarette-smoking/>

themselves as the only option. They continuously claim to be the only healthy diet for the human being, but they purposely ignore all the changes that the world is facing and all the research that has been done²⁰ showing that a plant-based diet is the healthiest lifestyle for any human being. So, they have “authenticated” themselves and society into this belief and now the vegan community tries to uncover the ‘truth’ and spread the news of what is really happening behind the scenes of this destructive industry. So, this video is only an attempt to question the ‘status quo’ of this industry.

This understanding can also be explained under the *Authorization* and *Illegitimation* pair of the *Relationality Principle* as it considers an institutionalized power as responsible for the formation of an identity. As it was mentioned in the last paragraph, the meat and dairy industries have established their markets in a way that few people question whether a diet containing meat and dairy is actually good or healthy for the human body. It is so well institutionalized that it is able to control the information passed on to citizens. Again, the market “dictates” what is good and healthy without taking into consideration the non-sponsored (and because of that, trustworthy) scientific research on health (CAMPBELL, 2016; WANG, 2015; MACKNIN, 2015, BARNARD, 2006, 2005; NICHOLSON, 1999; SABATÉ, 1999; TURNER-MCGRIEVY, 2007; DOS SANTOS SILVA, 2002) and the environment (MEAT ATLAS, 2014). This is why the question “Where do you get your protein” has become such a common question to vegans/vegetarians. Moreover, the *Authorization* principle shows that the question asked is a way of legitimizing their identity, as humans “cannot survive without meat”, which is the “best” source of protein. On the other hand, *Illegitimation* is portrayed by the actions the vegan community has undertaken in order to undermine the hegemonic authority.

²⁰ Overall health (CAMPBELL, 2016; ZIMMER et al, 2012), decreasing the chances of heart attack (MACKNIN, 2015; MISHRA, 2013; NAVARRO, 2010; SABATÉ, 1999), cholesterol (WANG, 2015; MISHRA, 2013), obesity (BARNARD, 2005; TURNER-MCGRIEVY, 2007; NICHOLSON, 1999), diabetes (LI, 2008; BARNARD, 2005, 2006) and cancer (DOS SANTOS SILVA, 2002)

4.2 Sentence 2

“Did you know that Hitler was a vegetarian?”

In this question, the speaker informs the listener of a really “interesting” fact: Hitler was a vegetarian. As in the previous example, the meat-eater uses a question in order to demonstrate that they know something unusual that relates to the topic of vegetarianism. They somehow try to undermine the identity of the vegan community, as they mention “Hitler”. By doing that, they are constructing non-alignments in relation to the other group by evaluating the vegan identity in a negative way.

The information displayed by the speaker is used to shock and leave the listener apprehensive. The speaker constructs a negative instance of *Judgment of Social Sanction* (Chapter 2) towards the vegan community and by doing that they are separating themselves from the “bad” or “unethical” group (*Judgement of Propriety*); a way of condemning the vegetarian community. However, another type of *Judgement* occurs if we take the perspective of the vegetarians, who might know that the information is untrue or false (See footnote 9, on page 36), which deals with the *Judgement of Veracity*. That means the aim here is to expose a truth about Hitler simply to shock who is vegetarian or vegan.

Taking the *Adequation* and *Distinction* pair of tactics (Chapter 2) to shed some light into this, I could say that there is a plan of building an identity detachment, with no *solidarity*, as the intention is to demonstrate the negative aspect of something which the listener believes it is so beneficial to him/her. Stating that Hitler was a vegetarian means “I cannot be related to you because of that” or “I’m glad to be different from you, since I would not like to be related to the Nazi ideology”. So, the speaker is producing a *Distinction/Difference* in order to feel superior and make the different group feel uncomfortable and discredited. This can also be viewed differently as being compared to Hitler might mean that “it is not because you are vegan that I consider you to be superior” or “I am saying that because there are bad people who are vegetarians”.

Another *Relationality Principle*, *Authentication* and *Denaturalization*, can also be used to help us understand the last thought presented in the previous paragraph: “I am saying that because there are bad people who are vegetarians”. Belonging to a vegan community brings relatively stable sense of self (*Authentication*). However, through this question, somebody is implying that there might be “bad” people within your community. So, even though this vegan identity is constructed in a way that it feels cohesive (*Authentication*), there are trials to destabilize the essentialist claims of *Authentication*, since it is common sense to agree that this community has all kinds of people, like any other one.

It is interesting to notice the racist assumptions implied by this simple question, when the speaker decides to associate white nationalism to veganism. Clearly, language is being used here to impact negatively a certain group and is also being used as an excuse why the speaker should not go vegan. Moreover, there seems to be a complete disregard for any kind of serious inquiry about the diet itself²¹. Unfortunately, nowadays the so called Aryans, the “pure race”, defend a “high-carb low-fat vegan diet” and go further to say that “people with non-Aryan metabolism who consume carbohydrates in large quantities easily become obese and/or diabetic, because their bodies are biologically incapable of processing carbohydrates” due to “defective genes”²², which for the meat-eater community might be scary, as for the vegetarians. So, even though many might not know this, I believe there might still be a process of self-denial, as they disregard the recent studies and the growth of veganism in favor of the community that does not have a voice for themselves: the animals.

²¹ Hitler was not vegetarian, let alone vegan. Check: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-two/9859294/Hitlers-food-taster-speaks-of-Fuhrers-vegetarian-diet.html>

²² Check this on: <http://aryanism.net/culture/aesthetics/food/>

4.3 Sentence 3

“Do you think being a vegetarian is just like a phase you’re going through?”

Another common question is asked with a similar understanding of sentence 1, as it shows the authority and status which the meat and dairy consumers have acquired. For the speaker, the meat-based diet is the staple diet and that the vegetarian or vegan diet was chosen for a short time, because it cannot be considered a serious or trustworthy diet. The proposition reveals an instance of negative *Judgement of Social Esteem* (Chapter 2) for the implied criticism there is.

The meat industry is so powerful that, by this question, you can realize that a meat-based diet is still considered the only option for the human body. By stating “it is just a phase”, they consider it to be a fad; a diet that people engage for a short while and eventually go back to “normal”, since the “normal diet” has meat in it (*Judgement of Tenacity and Normality*). For these reasons, as sentence 1, sentence 3 shows how unquestionable this statement feels (*Judgement of Tenacity*) for the speaker as this identity has become *unmarked* (*Judgement of Normality*) by society and therefore conquers institutional power.

The speaker grounds her attitudinal position in *Judgement of Normality* as this question shows the institutionalized behavior of meat-eaters in the Western world, which have stated that the meat and dairy industries have become the norm and anything different from that cannot be accepted by most of society. The attitude of asking this question acts to keep and defend their own identity, disregarding if the speaker is actually right or wrong. This question, like all the other statements shown in this analysis, uncovers the opinions about entities. It is not simply a matter of personal opinion. The personal opinion is deeply related to what is happening in society at this moment (Context of Culture) (HALLIDAY, 2014).

I choose to use the *Relationality Principle of Authorization and Illegitimation* (Chapter 2) to show that this question implies that the vegan diet cannot be considered a real diet for a healthy human being. The speaker finds a way of *not legitimizing* the vegan diet and in doing so, he/she helps to strengthen the power of

the dairy and meat industries. Again, the speaker does not believe that a vegan diet is an option. A meat-based diet, nowadays, seems to linger simply because we let our habits, beliefs and past experiences take the lead of our lives.

4.4 Sentence 4

“I bet you’d be healthier if you ate meat.”

This extract represents the situation in which non-vegans/vegetarians talk to vegans/vegetarians who are going through a small health problem such as a cold/the flu. The assertiveness shows that the meat-eaters know better (Principle of *Authorization*) (Chapter 2); that if people ate meat, they would certainly be healthier. Similarly, the *Illegitimation Principle* (Chapter 2) explains that, by ignoring the *markedness* of the industry and its power, one can easily make it more powerful, thus resulting it to be unethical (*Judgement of Propriety*).

The speaker uses *Judgement of Social Sanction* (Chapter 2) through criticism and somehow condemns the friend for having decided to become vegan. The speaker takes advantage of the fact that the friend has a cold to try to convince her that he is right. There is an instance of *Judgment of Veracity* since the intention is to show the relation between a healthier lifestyle and the consumption of meat; that there is a probability of your poor health being related to being vegetarian/vegan. The criticism also implies some disappointment with the attitude and lifestyle of the vegetarian/vegan (*Judgement of Propriety*). The conviction also construes an instance of *Tenacity* (*Judgement of Social Esteem*), because the given warning should be taken into consideration for its “sensible” message.

Once more, we can see the amount of misinformation going on when people do not consider all the research being done and expect the industry and economic powers to dictate what is good for you. The power of these institutions is so immense that when a question like that comes up in an informal and unpretentious way, we do not question it, and we do not even pay attention to it.

4.5 Sentence 5

“I think it is really expensive to be a vegetarian.”

Here, the speaker believes that it is really expensive to be a vegetarian and somehow gives an excuse why he has not gone vegan yet.

This statement is judgemental, but more concerned with *Judgment of Social Esteem*, because it construes an instance of negative *Judgement of Tenacity* as it evaluates veganism as an expensive style of living out of conviction and also of *Judgement of Capacity* because of the characterization of the type of diet (which seems to be expensive). It is simply an opinion based on hypothesis as the vegans know they might adopt this diet on a very small budget.

Once again, the *Authorization Principle* shows that the legitimacy of the meat and dairy industries might be one of the reasons why this person is being led to believe that sustaining veganism is expensive. The market is controlled by these industries, and so are the researchers. Another point is the lack of information people have as a result of lack of interest in the subject. Also, certainties due to habits, beliefs or conventions are socially constructed based on the dominant culture: the meat-eaters.

4.6 Sentence 6

“You don’t look like a vegetarian at all!”

This statement portrays the stereotypes of this identity group, who is expected to be very thin. By saying that, the speaker expects that vegetarians should all look the same. If you belong to the vegetarian community, the outsider expects you, not only to look all the same, but to behave and live “accordingly”. So, in the speaker’s eyes, if you are not skinny, you cannot be a vegetarian. Therefore, you cannot feel

you belong to the same identity group. Also, they might see vegans as too skinny, unhealthy and/or hippies.

In my opinion, this is one of the only positive *Judgements of Social Esteem* (*Judgement of Normality*) a meat-eater can say about a vegetarian, because somehow they can relate to this person and they get the idea that if they are not skinny, they might somehow relate to them and be interpreted as “normal” (the person to whom the speaker is talking has a “normal” body or is not skinny; maybe he is neither fat, nor skinny). There might be *solidarity* in the sentence, as somehow they can feel they are alike or that they are sufficiently similar (*Principle of Adequation*).

Based on the *Authentication Principle*, from an outsider’s perspective, it seems that the vegetarian community is static, made of the same kind of people. However, any identity group is made up of fragments and within vegetarianism we may find different kinds of people who come together due to one aspect of their lives, but that there are many other aspects which do not need to be taken into consideration. So, this statement activates essentialist readings (Chapter 2) about this specific identity. The aim, however, is to show exactly the opposite: to portray the amalgam of many other identities within this identity studied here (*Denaturalization*) (Chapter 2). Also, being a vegetarian/vegan does not mean letting go of who you really are; it is just a small aspect of your life and this movement just exists because of the changes the world is going through²³.

²³ See the following references:

BEFORE THE FLOOD. Trailer available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9xFFyUOpXo>. Website accessed on 18th of January, 2019.

GORE, Al. *An inconvenient truth: The planetary emergency of global warming and what we can do about it*. Rodale, 2006.

H.O.P.E. *What we eat matters*. Available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOYHjPHm-Sc>. Website accessed on: 18th January, 2018.

MARLOW, Harold J. et al. *Diet and the environment: does what you eat matter?* The American journal of clinical nutrition, 2009.

MEAT ATLAS. *Facts and figures about the animals we eat*. Heinrich Boll Foundation and Friends of the Earth Europe. 2014. Available on:

https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/meat_atlas2014_kommentierbar.pdf. Website accessed on: 21st of July, 2018.

RACING EXTINCTION. Available On: <https://racingextinction.com/film/>. Website accessed 18th of January, 2018.

SHIVA, Vandana. *Staying alive: Women, ecology, and development*. North Atlantic Books, 2016.

It is interesting to note how PETA decided to impact the meat-eaters by showing scenes in which vegans play the opposite roles. This way, there is a high chance of meat-eaters realizing that a sentence such as “I think it's really expensive to eat meat” might sound quite silly since nobody stops eating meat altogether JUST because it is expensive. The habits are so ingrained in us that we do not think of stopping eating meat simply because of the price, even though poor people might do that because of financial reasons.

Apart from that, there is a good number of people who think that veganism, more specifically, is for the white upper class. Stereotypes and prejudice are part and product of social discursive practices and we need to look into it in order to see clearer and make more informed judgements.

5 Final Overview

First, the analysis I did for each sentence does not portray all that could be done within the *Relationality Principle* and *Judgement* categories since this analysis takes into consideration my perspective as a researcher and a vegetarian at the time of the research. This was just a small sample which can be expanded in future researches.

Second, it is of extreme importance to understand the power relations that occur in the construction of these two identities. The *unmarkedness* that exists in relation to the institutions that control the world makes changes more difficult because, apart from breaking a habit that was inculcated in us from birth (and habits are extremely difficult to change), we still need to be aware and acknowledge the new world we are living in.

Also, I would like to repeat that several researchers of the field use lexicogrammatical items (See first section of Chapter 4) as a tool to get to the analysis. However, in my data, the analysis had to be construed taking into consideration the *context*, since the *text* was full of hidden meanings, sarcasm and humor. So, the focus went beyond the lexical items found on the extracts and the objective was to understand what the real meaning of the extracts was with the help of the Relationality Principle (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, 2005) and the Appraisal System (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005). These approaches gave each sentence different and complementary perspectives on how they could be understood. The identities portrayed were laid out by the stances that occurred (even though fictional, but which represented the ordinary exchange between the groups); the habits and intentions of the identity groups; and of what goes beyond that.

Finally, I believe PETA was successful in publishing this ad. More and more people around the globe are becoming vegetarians and vegans and we depend on institutions like this to spread the message of a healthier lifestyle and a safer place to live for all the animals, including ourselves.

6 Conclusion

First of all, my intention, since before I started this research, was to try to interpret the vegetarianism phenomenon in a different way, as a “social scientist” (RAJAGOPALAN, 2003); in other words, as a contributor to the understanding of the roles of vegans/vegetarians and non-vegans/vegetarians within a society in transformation; a society that needs change in order to survive. So, here I encompassed the analysis on how these groups relate to one another to construct dominance and meaning. I did that with the help of tools such as the *Relationality Principles* (BUCHOLTZ & HALL, 2004, 2005) and the *Appraisal System of Judgement* (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005) laid out in Chapters 2 and 3.

Most people are not aware of the intricacies concerning the meat industry, but in fact vegans and vegetarians are usually the ones who know most of the published scientific evidence on which they base their explanations, such as: animal welfare, antibiotic resistance, climate change, rain forest deforestation, famine, water acidification, cancer, diabetes, heart disease and so on. Even though these facts are backed scientifically (CAMPBELL, 2016; WANG, 2015; MACKNIN, 2015; MEAT ATLAS, 2014; MISHRA, 2013; ZIMMER et al, 2012; NAVARRO, 2010; LI, 2008; BARNARD, 2006, 2005; NICHOLSON, 1999; SABATÉ, 1999; TURNER-MCGRIEVY, 2007; DOS SANTOS SILVA, 2002), the discourses show a strong resistance by non-vegans/vegetarians to accept them, simply due to habits society and the agro-industry have inculcated in us.

I would adventure to other ways of analyzing the same topic. For example, I would like to read more academic papers on vegetarianism which use other approaches of research. I could extend my understandings with the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (FAIRCLOUGH and WODAK, 1997), since the chosen theme also deals with discourse and power.

Finally, I would say that this analysis has an importance to my start as a researcher as it contributes to my own understanding of the intricacies of identity awareness once I was able to identify particularities of discourses I am used to, between vegans/vegetarians and non-vegans/vegetarians.

7 Annex

Transcript:

00:00

Where do you get your fiber? Did you know

00:04

that Hitler ate meat? So there was this

00:06

couple and they fed their baby meat and

00:08

the baby died? Do you think that eating meat

00:11

is just like a phase you're going

00:12

Through? Do you care if I eat this in

00:14

front of you?

00:14

I would eat meat, but I don't think I

00:17

could give up tempeh. I'm sorry. Too much?

00:20

Would you eat that dog? Would you

00:23

eat meat if you were pregnant? Let's just

00:25

say that you're flying over the Atlantic

00:26

Ocean and the plane starts to go down

00:28

And, you're like, this is not good, we're

00:29

in the middle of the ocean, and the plane

00:30

crashes and you make it to an island and

00:32

some of the bodies wash up too and

00:34

the ocean takes away the bodies and you

00:36

can't eat the bodies and there's no meat

00:37

around it, would you eat a coconut? I bet

00:40

your parents hate that you eat meat.

Like

00:42

our Potluck is the worst. Do you know,

00:44

they can't just present two dishes. They

00:45

have to say like this is the meat one.

How can you

00:48

tell if someone eats meat? Don't worry!

00:50

They'll tell you. It's a funny joke, right?

00:55
((couch)). I bet you'd be healthier if you
00:57
didn't eat any meat. I think it's really
00:59
expensive to eat meat. Do you have a
trust
01:01
Fund? How do you afford this? I don't
know.
01:03
I've always felt like any meat eater I've
01:04
known just smells weird.
01:09
You can just tell. It's on your skin. If
01:12
we stopped eating vegetables, they
would
01:14
just like take over. You don't look like
01:17
a meat-eater at all!
01:18
You know, they'd be everywhere you'd
like
01:21
oh go into work, corn. Plants are here
for
01:24
humans to eat. like Oh gotta catch the
01:27

bus..Oh watermelons thrown all out
01:28
everywhere
01:29
nah it would be madness. You'd be like
Oh oh oh
01:32
Going downtown, can't! Soregum,
barley,
01:36
rolled oats, yeah, you laugh, but what if
01:40
it really happened? Then what? Do they
01:44
make like tempeh alarm clocks like
01:46
sprays it in your face when you're
01:47
asleep and it just like blast with
01:50
that flavor experience? Come back! So
like
01:52
why why do you eat meat though? Can I
ask
01:56
That? Is that okay, like, from person to
01:57
Person, like why do you eat meat? Tell
me,
01:59
explain to me! Oh. Okay, that's enough.

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