Language and Visual Strategies in Unveiling Fear Emotions: A Case Study of The Main Characters in "*Frozen I*"

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of language and visual strategies in unveiling fear emotions portrayed by the main characters, Elsa and Anna, in the animated movie *Frozen I*. Fear, as a universal and fundamental human emotion, is often employed in narratives to create dramatic tension and to deepen character development. In this research, a qualitative approach grounded in Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) was applied to examine both linguistic and visual resources that construct the meaning of fear in selected scenes. Dialogues were analyzed based on Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar framework. The findings demonstrate that fear is revealed through a combination of language and visual markers. Language, fear is expressed by hesitant lexical choices, modal verbs that indicate uncertainty and restraint, and repetition and intonation shifts that reinforce insecurity. Visually, fear is represented through close-up shots emphasizing facial expressions—such as widened eyes and trembling lips—body gestures of withdrawal and avoidance, and cinematic techniques including dim lighting and cold color palettes. Together, these strategies highlight how meaning emerges from the interaction of verbal and non-verbal modes, making internal psychological states observable and relatable for audiences. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach, which bridges linguistic and visual analysis to explore how fear as an emotion is multimodally constructed in animated film. This study contributes not only to the field of multimodal discourse analysis but also to broader discussions on how emotions are culturally mediated in popular media. It suggests that animated films such as Frozen play a significant role in shaping audience perceptions of psychological struggles, identity, and resilience through multimodal means.

Keywords: fear emotions, language strategies, visual strategies, Frozen 1, multimodal analysis

INTRODUCTION

Emotions all significantly influence human communication, cultural expression, and media depiction. Fear holds a prominent position among the fundamental emotions recognised by psychological research because of its close ties to social interaction, human fragility, and survival instincts. Fear is commonly used to create dramatic suspense, emphasise internal conflicts, and propel character development in stories, whether they are written or shown. Its portrayal not only conveys the characters' emotional states but also strikes a chord with viewers, allowing them to relate to and follow the plot.

A fascinating case study is Disney's *Frozen I* (2013), which uses the experiences of its two main characters, Elsa and Anna, to examine issues of acceptance, loneliness, and fear. Audiences of all ages can identify with their difficulties with fear, which are reflected in Anna's fear of abandonment and Elsa's fear of her unrestrained abilities.

Yanti (2021) states that the basic emotions refer to the emotional state or the strong feeling that is revealed through word use. These emotions are not just spontaneous reactions, but rather deep representations of one's psychological state that manifest in language choices. In addition to its popularity and cultural impact, *Frozen I* provides a valuable site for academic inquiry because it combines language expression and visual representation to communicate fear in nuanced ways, according to Parrot (2001) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). By examining selected scenes, this research aims to reveal how fear is constructed multimodally and how such constructions contribute to both narrative development and audience interpretation. This dual focus on language and visuals allows for a more comprehensive understanding of meaning-making in animated films.

Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to uncover how fear emotions are unveiled through linguistic and visual strategies in *Frozen I*. Beyond contributing to the study of multimodal discourse analysis, this research also seeks to highlight the role of animated films in shaping emotional literacy, cultural narratives, and social understanding.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature on applied theories in this study is described by the writer in this part, along with pertinent contributions made by several theorists.

1. Classification of Emotions

According to the classification of emotions put forward by Parrott (2001), there are six main categories of basic emotions that become umbrellas for more specific derivative emotions. The six basic emotions are love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness, and fear. Each category has a subcategory; for example, love includes affection, affection, and intimacy; joy includes cheerfulness, pride, and optimism; surprise relates to a sense of amazement or astonishment; anger includes frustration, envy, hatred, and aggression; sadness includes guilt, loneliness, and depression; while fear includes anxiety, nervousness, insecurity, worry, to panic. Thus, fear, which is the focus of this research, is one of the basic emotions in Parrott's classification, which specifically can be realized through derivatives such as anxiety, nervousness, insecurity, worry, and panic.

2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) offers a framework to investigate how multiple semiotic resources interact in the construction of meaning. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), communication is rarely limited to a single mode; instead, it involves the integration of language, images, sounds, gestures, and spatial arrangements. MDA provides the analytical tools to examine how these modes complement, reinforce, or sometimes contradict one another in meaning-making processes. In the context of film, MDA is particularly relevant because cinematic texts combine spoken language, visual imagery, soundtracks, and editing techniques to deliver layered messages that extend beyond the verbal mode alone.

3. Research Gap and Relevance

Although much research has addressed either linguistic or visual representations of emotions, relatively few studies have integrated both approaches within the same analysis. This gap is particularly evident in animated films, where emotions are entirely constructed by multimodal strategies rather than by live actors. By focusing on *Frozen I*, this study contributes to bridging this gap, examining how fear emotions are conveyed through the integration of language and visual resources. This integrative approach not only enriches the field of multimodal discourse analysis but also deepens the understanding of how emotions are represented in popular culture and consumed by global audiences.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

1. Qualitative Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the verbal and visual techniques used to depict the feeling of fear in the characters Elsa and Anna in the film *Frozen I*. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research aims to understand the meanings behind a social phenomenon. This approach emphasizes description and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. Additionally, this research employs a multimodal approach by analyzing language as well as visual elements such as images, colors, lighting, and facial expressions to depict the emotion of fear.

2. Data and Source of Data

This research systematically explains the types and sources of data used to ensure the validity and relevance of the findings concerning the problem formulation. The primary data in this study consists of verbal and visual elements from the film *Frozen I* (2013), which serves as the primary source for multimodal analysis due to its combination of linguistic and visual elements in depicting emotional expressions, particularly fear in its characters. The observed visual cues include gestures and body language such as trembling, covering the face, avoidance, or defensive postures, as well as cinematic techniques like camera angles (e.g., high-angle to show vulnerability), close-ups (to emphasize facial expressions), lighting (dim or flickering), and sound effects that enhance the atmosphere of fear. Meanwhile, the secondary data includes official dialogue transcripts and subtitles from the film, which serve as linguistic sources to accurately capture the speech of the characters, especially those related to emotions.

3. Technique of Data Collection

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings, a systematic and structured approach was applied in the data collection and coding process. First, the researcher repeatedly watched the film *Frozen I* to understand the storyline and identify the scenes that are most relevant in portraying the emotion of fear, particularly in the character of Elsa. Each scene that shows fear in Elsa was recorded as primary data. Secondly, the dialogues of the characters—especially those involving Elsa's expressions of fear—were transcribed and analyzed to find words or phrases that reflect fear or anxiety, using the official film script as a reference.

4. Technique of Data Coding

To code the data in this study, which focuses on the analysis of the emotion of fear through language and visuals in the film Frozen, the researcher first developed a systematic analysis matrix to record all the elements to be coded. This matrix includes two main categories: verbal modality (such as the dialogue and monologue of characters) and visual modality (such as color, lighting, facial expressions, body movements, camera composition, and other cinematic elements). Each data point is coded based on several supporting components that contribute to forming a multimodal representation of the emotion of fear within the film's narrative.

Table 1. Example of Table Coding Data

Scene	Verbal	Interaction	Visual	Constructed Meaning of Fear
	Imperative sentence: "Don't feel!"	Reinforcement	Rigid posture, sharp ice reflections, purple-red palette	Fear of emotional exposure (Elsa's suppression & loss of control)
	"No. I don't want to hurt you." → prohibition + request sentence	Reinforcement	Elsa retreated to the wall, her body stiff, her hands raised defensively, ice spread from her body.	Fear of harming others → Elsa's fear that her power can hurt the closest people
	"Please don't shut me out again." → a plea with an emotional tone	Complementarity	Anna stood on the ice steps, her body leaning forward, her hands stretched out, her expression pleading.	Fear of abandonment → Anna's fear of being rejected and abandoned by Elsa

5. Technique of Data Analysis

Data analysis techniques in this study are carried out through several structured stages. First, the researcher identifies scenes related to the emotion of fear, particularly those involving the character Elsa, by noting the time and context of the scenes specifically. Second, a language analysis is conducted on the dialogues that appear in those scenes to reveal verbal expressions of fear through word choice, sentence structure, and speech functions based on the theory of expressive speech acts. Third, visual element analysis is performed to observe how aspects such as lighting, color, facial expressions, body movements, and camera angles are used to construct the atmosphere or image of fear cinematically

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the research provide an in-depth discussion based on the multimodal analysis of fear emotions expressed by the main characters in *Frozen I*. The analysis is grounded in the framework of **Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)**, particularly focusing on **expressive speech acts** (Searle, 1979), **basic emotion categories** (Parrott, 2001), **Multimodal transcription** (Baldry & Thibault, 2006), **and The Grammar of Visual design** (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This chapter aims to identify how fear is linguistically and visually expressed, and how verbal and visual strategies interact to construct emotional meaning throughout the narrative. Each finding is supported by excerpts from the film, descriptions of visual elements, and interpretive commentary to highlight the multimodal representation of fear.

1. FINDINGS

1.1 Language Expressions of Fear from Main Characters

1.1.1 Horror
- **Shock:** A sudden, unexpected, and usually unpleasant event or experience

(Data 1)

ELSA: *What?*
(00":55:55)

In data (1), this scene happens when Elsa has just accidentally released her power in front of the public, so Arendelle is suddenly hit by an eternal winter. Hearing directly about the state of the eternal winter caused, Elsa was stunned and could only say briefly, "***What?***" This situation depicts a sudden shock due to a huge impact that he did not realize before. Linguistically, the short interrogative form that is spoken spontaneously shows shock in the form of horror, which is fear that appears suddenly and makes Elsa lose the ability to think clearly.

- **Fright:** The feeling of fear, especially if felt suddenly, or an experience of fear that happens suddenly

(Data 2)

ANNA: *"Wolves? What do we do?"*

(00:42:16)

In data (2), this scene occurs when Anna and Kristoff are on a journey to find Elsa in the snowy forest. Suddenly, they were blocked by a pack of wild wolves that attacked their sleds. Shocked by the sudden threat, Anna shouted, ***"Wolves? What do we do?"*** This situation shows a spontaneous reaction to immediate danger. A short question full of panic expresses fright in the form of horror, which is a sudden fear that makes him confused about what to do. This verbal panic reveals Anna's fear and uncertainty about facing natural threats.

1.1.2 Nervousness

- Uneasiness: Worry

(Data 3)

ANNA: I'm getting what I'm dreaming of.
ELSA: *Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know.*
(00:15:55)

In data (3), this scene takes place when Anna enthusiastically tells her hope for love, while Elsa, with a tense face, repeats the sentence that has been embedded since childhood: ***"Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know."*** The context of this situation shows an emotional contrast between the optimistic Anna and the fear-haunted Elsa. Elsa's words that are full of repetition indicate uneasiness, which is constant anxiety because of trying to suppress emotions. Instruction to himself becomes a verbal strategy to avoid the potential loss of control, while showing fear that continues to dominate his daily life.

- Distress: A feeling of extreme worry, sadness, or pain

(Data 4)

ANNA**:** *I don't even know what love is.*
(01:20:54)

In data (4), this scene appears after Anna is betrayed by Hans and left in a state where her body is being frozen. With a soft voice full of sadness, Anna said, *"I don't even know what love is."* The situation depicts the lowest point in Anna's emotional journey, where her hopes collapse along with her critical physical condition. This declarative sentence shows distress in the form of nervousness, which is a deep feeling of worry and despair. A calm but emotionally exhausted tone confirmed his vulnerability in the midst of the imminent threat of death.

1.2 Visual Strategies Representing Fear in *Frozen I*

Beyond spoken language, fear in *Frozen I* is also represented visually through cinematic elements. This subsection examines how colors, gestures, facial expressions, lighting, and camera framing construct the visual portrayal of fear. Following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) concept of representational and interactive meaning, visual strategies in the film work to create atmospheres of tension, vulnerability, and emotional distance.

(Data 5)

Scene: Ice Palace Accident

This scene shows a collapsing posture in Anna, who appears to be kneeling with a hunched body. This posture, as part of the **Representational Meaning** (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), represents a fragile, weak condition, as well as suffering due to a highly stressful emotional situation. Unlike Elsa, who stands in front with a worried expression, Anna's posture emphasizes physical helplessness while also indicating an effort to endure emotional distress. This visual strategy illustrates how body language is used to represent fear and tension in character relationships.

(Data 6)

Scene: Isolation in the Bedroom

This scene shows a sustained pleading gaze through Anna's forward gaze, filled with hope, even though her body leans weakly against the wall. In the context of **Interactive Meaning** (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), this gaze can be interpreted as an indirect Demand, where Anna emotionally 'demands' attention and response, even without direct eye contact with other characters. This prolonged gaze represents a longing and emotional plea to be seen and heard. The seated position leaning on the floor reinforces the impression of vulnerability, yet the unwavering gaze emphasizes the strong desire to rebuild closeness. Thus, this visual strategy

presents a symbol of Anna's perseverance in seeking affection, despite her marginalized and lonely state.

(Data 7)

Scene: Building Ice Palace

This scene depicts the visual strategy of Isolation framing through the placement of Elsa alone in the midst of a vast and dark snowy slope. The spatial composition showing a white expanse without the presence of other characters emphasizes the impression of alienation and separation from the surrounding world. In terms of **Compositional Meaning** (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), Elsa's placement in the Center and the vast background as Margin reinforces the informational value that Elsa is the main focus and is isolated. The purple cloak, contrasting with the dark blue background, strengthens the focus that Elsa is an isolated figure, trapped in solitude due to her fear of her own powers. Thus, isolation framing is used to represent feelings of alienation, loneliness, and loss of connection with others, all of which are manifestations of fear.

1.3 The Integration of Verbal and Visual Strategies

While verbal and visual modes can stand independently, the meaning of fear in *Frozen I* is most powerfully conveyed when these two strategies are integrated. This subsection analyzes how dialogues and visual cues complement and reinforce one another, creating a multimodal representation of fear. Using the framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), the study shows that the synergy between words and images generates layered emotional meanings. The integration highlights how cinematic texts rely on both linguistic and visual resources to communicate complex psychological states more effectively.

(Data 8)

Please don't shut me out again.

Scene: Ice Palace Accident

In the scene when Anna says, ***"Please don't shut me out again,"*** her fear appears clearly as a verbal expression of fear of rejection and loss of connection with Elsa. **Visual**s also reinforce this by showing Anna standing on the ice steps, her body slightly lowered while reaching towards Elsa, but blocked by a significant physical distance—Anna was at the bottom while Elsa was far above and turned her back on her. The interaction between the two forms is complementary, where Anna's words show fear of rejection, while the visuals of vertical space and disconnected hand gestures emphasize emotional separation. This whole scene represents fear not as a physical fear, but a fear of abandonment, which is the fear of losing the emotional bond with the closest person.

(Data 9)

Scene: Ice Palace Accident

In the scene when Elsa says ***"Don't feel!"***, there is a clear interaction of verbal and visual strategies in building fear emotions. The statement is a form of prohibition directed at himself, indicating a hard effort to suppress emotions that he considers dangerous. **Visually**, this scene is shown through the figure of Elsa standing alone in the middle of a dark room with purple-red shades, with cracked ice floors spreading. His body stiffened with his hands close to his chest, as if trying to hold something from inside him. This **combination** of verbal and visual shows a pattern of **reinforcement** as well as narrative framing, where the prohibition words are reinforced by closed body gestures and a cold, isolated atmosphere. The dark color and sharp reflection of the ice become a visual frame that emphasizes repression and fear. Thus, the fear that appears is Elsa's internal fear of her own emotions, because she realizes that if those feelings are released, her power has the potential to get out of control and destroy her surroundings.

2 DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study show that the expression of fear in *Frozen I* is multimodal. Fear is not only conveyed through verbal language but is shaped through a combination of speech and visual signals that create a deep emotional narrative. Linguistic features such as doubt, rhetorical questions, repetition, and emotional phrases reveal the psychological state of the characters. However, the full emotional power is only felt when these elements merge with visual aspects such as intonation, body language, color palette, camera angles, and lighting.

Overall, the comparison between verbal and visual modes shows a complementary relationship in constructing the meaning of fear. Verbally, fear emerges through expressive and directive

actions, especially in Anna and Elsa. Visually, Elsa becomes the main representation of internal fear, while Anna displays relational and sacrificial fear. This finding reveals two faces of fear in *Frozen I*: fear as a communicative emotion (verbal) and symbolic-internal (visual). Both merge to create a strong emotional representation that is relevant for audiences across ages and cultures.

CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms that the representation of the emotion of fear in Frozen 1 is constructed through a dynamic interaction between linguistic and visual resources. Linguistically, fear is conveyed through the use of rhetorical strategies such as repetition, modality, and hedging, emphasizing the characters' uncertainty and vulnerability. Meanwhile, visually, facial expressions, body posture, and cinematic techniques (e.g., close-ups, lighting, and framing) play a crucial role in reinforcing the emotional nuances conveyed.

These findings highlight the function of multimodality in animated films not only as an aesthetic tool but also as a narrative device capable of conveying the psychological complexity of characters and evoking emotional resonance in the audience. Thus, fear can be understood not merely as an individual emotion but also as a cultural and symbolic construct that plays a significant role in the structure of the story.

This research provides theoretical contributions to the study of multimodal discourse analysis and film studies, while also opening up opportunities for further research to expand the focus to other emotions or to compare the representation of emotions in animated and live-action films to deepen our understanding of multimodal strategies in emotional representation.
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