



**LANGUAGE AND VISUAL STRATEGIES IN UNVEILING FEAR EMOTIONS: A  
CASE STUDY OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS (ELSA AND ANNA) IN “*FROZEN I*”**

**THESIS**

***Submitted to Fulfill a Partial Requirement for S1 Degree in The English Department,***

***Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta***

**BY:**

**ELIT AGUSRIL**

**2110014211028**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
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## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify the originality of this thesis I submitted to fulfil a requirement for a S1 degree in the English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta. This thesis is entirely mine and there are no works or opinions written or published by other people except as reference or quotations by following the usual scientific writing procedures.

Padang, 15 September 2025



Elit Agusril

# LANGUAGE AND VISUAL STRATEGIES IN UNVEILING FEAR EMOTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS (ELSA AND ANNA) IN “FROZEN I”

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the interplay between language and visual strategies in conveying the emotion of fear as portrayed by the main character in Frozen (2013). Using a qualitative descriptive approach within a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) framework, the analysis draws on Searle's (1979) theory of expressive speech acts, Parrott's (2001) classification of basic emotions, and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar. Data were obtained from selected scenes containing verbal and visual expressions of fear, supported by transcripts and subtitles to ensure linguistic accuracy. The research findings indicate that fear in Frozen I is not only expressed verbally through explicit utterances—such as warnings, pleas, and rhetorical questions—but is also complexly constructed through visual semiotics, including a cool color palette, dim lighting, close-up framing, defensive gestures, and gaze aversion. The synergy between linguistic and visual modes creates a layered emotional narrative that enhances audience engagement and empathy. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of multimodal analysis that combines pragmatics, psychology of emotion, and visual semiotics perspectives in examining the construction of the emotion of fear in children's animated films, something that is still rarely done. The specific focus on the emotion of fear—rather than moral values or friendship as in previous research—offers a new perspective on the character dynamics of Elsa and Anna. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of multimodal linguistics and pragmatics; practically, it provides insights for filmmakers, animators, and media creators in designing emotionally resonant visual narratives*

**Keywords:** *language and emotion, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, fear emotions, frozen 1*

## **ORIGINALITY STATEMENT**

This is to certify the originality of this thesis which I now submit to fulfill a requirement for an S1 in The English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta. The content of this thesis is entirely my work. All assistance received in writing this thesis and the source cited have been acknowledged within the text of my work.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to express their appreciation to Allah SWT for providing them with encouragement, health, gifts, and grace so they can finish writing a thesis. And also want to express my gratitude to the Prophet Muhammad SAW for being the Muslim leader throughout history. One of the requirements for earning a Bachelor of Humanities degree at Bung Hatta University was completing the writing as part of the final project at the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities.

Thus, with the utmost humility, the writer would like to take this opportunity to thank:

1. With all humility, the writer expresses sincere gratitude to Dr. Yusrita Yanti, M. Hum, a supervisor lecturer who has imparted not only knowledge, but also patience as a second language. Guidance, reprimand, even silence in guidance has become an important part in forming the writer's steadfastness.
2. With full sincerity, Temmy Thamrin, S.S., M. Hum., Ph. D, and Diana Chitra Hasan, M.Hum, M.Ed, Ph.D, the examiners who sharp minds uncovered gaps, and whose precise words guided the writer to see things that could not be read. Their criticism was not just a correction, but a window that expanded horizons.
3. Thank you to the Head of Major, Dra. Nova Rina, M. Hum, which provides a safe space for every student to grow. Her support, policy, and attention are the roots that strengthen the scientific stem so that it can stand tall.
4. Deep respect appreciation to all lectures in the environment Faculty of Humanities, Department of English Literature, who have become a light of knowledge, guiding with patience, and guiding with integrity. Thank you for every knowledge instilled, inspiration transmitted, and noble value taught, not only to be a learned person, but also a human being of integrity.



5. To beloved mother, Kartini, who passed away thirteen years ago. Time has indeed separated us, but your love never really goes away. There is a longing that grows every day, there is a prayer that never ends for you. Mother no longer has time to witness how your child learns to pursue education, no longer present to hear stories about fatigue and ups and downs of this struggle. However, the writer is sure, from your peaceful place, you smile seeing your child keep walking. The writer wrote this thesis with a chest full of longing, as a small offering that wants to whisper to you: that your love is never in vain, that even though there is no longer your embrace in the world, your love still manifests strength in every step.
6. To beloved father, Salman, who five years ago returned to the day of Allah SWT. Losing you leaves a silent space that is never really filled, but from that space the writer learns about steadfastness. Even though I didn't have time to witness today, the writer believes that you are still present in an invisible way—becoming a guiding light, a strengthening wind, a prayer that the writer has never heard but always felt. All these journeys are longing that are sewn into prayers, are love that is rewritten in the form of struggle. The writer put this thesis as a simple flower in the tomb of your memories, hopefully the fragrance will reach heaven and be a sign that a child's love is never interrupted by death
7. Not to forget. First sister, Yesi Sartika and brother-in-law, David Chandra, the writer holds a gratitude that cannot be paid with words. You are the shoulder that is always ready to bear the weight, the hand that always tries to open the way, even when you have to sacrifice many things for the sake of writer's education. The financial support that you fight for by all means is not just help, but a sign of love and sincerity that ignites the fire of spirit every time this step is almost extinguished. From you, the

writer earns the true meaning of family: that love never counts, and sacrifices born of love will always be a blessing.

8. The writer also expresses gratitude to second sister, Refni Salfia and third brother, Rapat Saputra, who always give prayers, moral support, and the warmth of their replaceable brotherhood. Their presence becomes a reinforcement in facing challenges, a reminder to stay strong, and a source of spirit that never goes out.
9. With full gratitude of my heart, I present this thesis to the friends in the village who the writer has considered as his own sister, Rona Fadhila, Syofie Rahmanti Safira, Fira Saswita, who are always loyal to be my place to share stories about the bittersweet struggle. Thank you for being here as a reinforcement and support in life, even though now the distance and busyness of work make us separate. May every prayer, laughter, and memory that we have been through become a close bond that is timeless.
10. With sincerity and gratitude, the writer present this work to my best friend as we called *Duo Gacor*, Dhiti Zulkarnaen, along with my beloved family that I have considered as my own family. At a time when I was depressed by economic limitations and almost lost my way, you were present not only as a helper, but also as a sincere support, which gave me warmth, strength, and new hope.
11. For classmates who have equalized the journey for these four years, both those who have already won the title and those who are still struggling to complete the steps, hopefully we will be reunited at the point of our respective great achievements. Special thanks also to Amanda Delta Rildo, who even wrote my name on your acknowledgement; it's really nice to have a classmate and playmate who gives color to this journey. Hopefully our togetherness will remain maintained, even though time and road will lead us in different directions.



12. Finally, I present this to myself, Elit Agusril, a child who is not embraced by fate.

Thank you for holding on when the hug didn't come, setting up hope from the pieces of tiredness, and still walking even though the road felt quiet; great, you've reached this point. Keep believing in the little power that brings you day after day, may this work be a silent witness of your courage and a reminder that all wounds are now supplies to weave a warmer future.

Padang, 15 September 2025

Elit Agusril

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Research

The Walt Disney Company was founded in 1923 and is regarded as a forerunner in contemporary animation, with a portfolio that includes theme parks, television shows, feature film, and streaming service. Disney's ability to combine universal stories with unique visual styles have contributed to its popularity and influenced popular culture worldwide. The Disney brand's ability to endure for more than a century shows how powerful storytelling and innovative visuals are the foundation of the business's competitive edge.

One of the major milestones in Disney's animation history was the release of *Frozen I* in 2013, directed by Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee. With themes of sisterhood, love, and emotional challenges, *Frozen* captivated a cross-generational audience and posted box office revenues of more than one billion US dollars. This commercial and critical success places *Frozen* as one of the icons of contemporary popular culture that deserves to be the object of scientific study in the realm of linguistics and visual studies. The film integrates themes of sisterhood, isolation, and emotional repression, with Elsa's internal fear of her uncontrollable powers serving as the core narrative engine. This emotional arc unfolds through dynamic visual strategies and verbal interactions, making *Frozen* a rich site for examining how multimodal elements work cohesively to construct fear.

According to Ekman (2007), fear is among the six basic emotions universally recognized across cultures, often manifested through distinct facial expressions, vocal tones, and bodily reactions. In cinematic texts, these emotional cues are encoded not only through language but also through multimodal resources such as visual design, kinesics, and



soundscape. In this context, language serves not only as a means of narrative progression but as a vehicle for psychological expression. Characters' utterances reflect their internal conflicts through expressive speech acts, as categorized by Searle (1979). Such utterances function to externalize inner turmoil, allowing the audience to access the emotional interior of the characters. When combined with visual semiotics—camera angles, lighting, gaze, color palettes, and gestures—they become powerful multimodal expressions of fear.

The effectiveness of *Frozen* in conveying fear does not rely solely on linguistic cues. The film's visual language—such as Elsa's rigid posture, dilated eyes, or the frequent use of icy blue tones—plays an equally vital role. These visual indicators align with Ekman's facial coding system, demonstrating involuntary facial and gestural patterns associated with fear. Moreover, elements like high-angle shots, cold lighting, and close-ups contribute to the atmosphere of vulnerability and psychological pressure. When analyzed together, verbal and visual cues form an integrated emotional narrative. Yanti (2021), state 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.

Despite the emotional intensity presented in *Frozen*, previous academic inquiries have largely treated visual and linguistic components as separate entities. Few studies attempt to analyze how verbal and visual strategies converge to construct fear in animated films. This gap limits our understanding of how meaning is shaped multimodally, particularly in the domain of affective discourse. The absence of integrative analysis also overlooks how films evoke empathy and tension—key aspects of emotional storytelling.

Furthermore, the significance of studying fear lies in its central role in shaping human behavior and interpersonal communication. Fear is not merely a biological response but also

a cultural and narrative construct that filmmakers employ to build suspense, deepen character development, and engage audiences emotionally. In the case of *Frozen*, Elsa's fear of her own powers reflects broader psychological and social realities such as self-repression, anxiety, and the struggle for acceptance. By examining these dynamics through a multimodal lens, this research seeks to uncover how animated narratives resonate with audiences on both cognitive and affective levels.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research also contributes to the growing field of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), which emphasizes the integration of language and non-linguistic semiotic resources in meaning-making. While traditional linguistic studies often privilege textual analysis, MDA allows for a more holistic examination of communication, especially in contemporary digital narratives where visuals, sounds, and gestures interplay with verbal language. Thus, employing MDA in the analysis of *Frozen* offers methodological innovation as well as practical insight into the evolving nature of discourse in media.

Therefore, this study adopts a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) framework to examine how fear is unveiled through the interplay of language and visual design in *Frozen I*. The analysis will focus on expressive speech acts that linguistically articulate fear, and visual markers that intensify emotional cues. Through this approach, the writer seeks to uncover how expressive utterances and cinematic techniques are orchestrated to communicate fear. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of multimodal linguistics and provide practical insights for creators of emotionally resonant visual narratives.

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contribute to the development of multimodal linguistics and provide practical insights for creators of emotionally resonant visual narratives.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the background described above, this research poses the following research questions:

1. How do the characters particularly Elsa and Anna express fear through language in *Frozen I*?
2. How visual strategies are used to represent fear throughout the film?
3. How do verbal and visual strategies interact to construct the meaning of fear within the film's narrative context?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

This research aims to achieve several objectives:

1. To find the ways how the characters, particularly Elsa and Anna, express fear through language in *Frozen I*?
2. To identify the visual strategies used to represent fear throughout the film
3. To explain how verbal and visual strategies interact to construct the meaning of fear within the film's narrative context.

## **1.4 Limitation of the Research**

This research has a number of limitations that need to be considered to properly understand the scope of the analysis. The main focus of this research is limited to the film *Frozen* (2013) as a single object, so the findings obtained are not intended to be generalized to the entire genre of animated films or other cinematic productions. In addition, the analysis is directed specifically at the character Elsa as the center of the representation of the emotion



of fear, although in the storyline there are other characters who also experience fear. Focusing on Elsa aims to deeply explore complex emotional dynamics through language and visual strategies, but indirectly limits the scope to the representation of fear experienced by the character individually

### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

This research makes significant contributions in both the theoretical and practical realms. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of pragmatics and visual analysis by revealing the relationship between language and visual elements in conveying emotions, especially fear, in the context of animated films. Through a multimodal approach, this research offers a new understanding of how the two modalities work synergistically in building emotional meaning. From a practical perspective, this research is relevant to the development of film and media studies, especially animation, which has tended to emphasize visual aspects over verbal ones. The results of this analysis can be utilized by filmmakers, animators, and scriptwriters as a guide in designing stronger emotional narratives through the effective incorporation of linguistic and visual strategies. In addition, this research is expected to increase public appreciation of animated films as complex works of art that combine aesthetics, emotions, and narrative elements in a deep and meaningful way.