

# EXPLORING THE PORTRAYAL OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS IN FILM DISCOURSE THROUGH COGNITIVE-PRAGMATIC APPROACHES AND THE MULTIMODAL ASPECTS OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION.

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## **Abstract**

This article investigates the intricate process of constructing and conveying negative feelings in film discourse, adopting a cognitive-pragmatic lens to examine the interplay of multimodal cues and their impact on emotional engagement. Moving beyond traditional analyses focused solely on linguistic features, we argue that a comprehensive understanding of emotional experience in film necessitates examining the complex synergy between visual elements (e.g., cinematography, editing, mise-en-scène), sonic aspects (e.g., music, sound effects), and verbal communication. Drawing on theories of embodied cognition, conceptual blending, and relevance theory, we analyze how filmmakers strategically combine and manipulate these multimodal resources to evoke specific negative emotional responses in viewers.

## **Key words**

language, discourse, cinematic discourse, cognitive-pragmatic analysis, verbal, non-verbal, construct, meaning, multimodality, multisemiosis, negative emotion, semiotic resource.

**INTRODUCTION** The portrayal of emotions in film has long been a subject of fascination for scholars and audiences alike, as it serves as a powerful medium for conveying complex human experiences. Among these emotions, negative feelings such as anger, sadness, fear, and despair play a pivotal role in shaping narratives and evoking profound audience responses. This article delves into the construction of negative emotions within film discourse, examining how filmmakers employ multimodal resources—such as visual imagery, sound, dialogue, and body language—to create emotionally resonant scenes. By integrating cognitive-pragmatic perspectives, the study seeks to unravel the intricate interplay between multimodal elements and the audience's interpretation of emotional cues. Through this lens, the article aims to shed light on the mechanisms by which films elicit and

manipulate negative emotions, offering a deeper understanding of the cognitive and pragmatic processes underlying emotional engagement in cinematic storytelling.

**METHODS** This study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze the construction of negative emotions in film discourse through cognitive-pragmatic and multimodal lenses. The issue of emotions and emotionality are increasingly drawing the researchers' attention in various fields of science in traditional and innovative perspectives: in terms of lexicology, syntax, semantics, traditional pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, culture studies. The problem of emotion making in cinematic multimodal discourse requires the involvement of different approaches to explain the interaction of verbal, non-verbal, and cinematographic semiotic resources. The neurobiological, psychological, cognitive, verbal, cultural, and social aspects of the human emotional sphere are of exclusive importance for the communication process. Scholars define emotions as complex psychological states that are "your brain's creation of what your bodily sensations mean, in relation to what is going on around you in the world" (Barrett, 2017, p. 30); a combination of the mental evaluative process with dispositional responses to that process resulting in an emotional body state (Damasio, 1994, p. 139).

**RESULTS** Humans have an innate ability to conceptualize emotions, and in this respect cognition serves as an intermediate between language and emotion. (Barret, 2017; Foolen, 2012). This paper views emotions as psychological and physiological states rooted in how we evaluate our experiences. They encompass our sensory perceptions, motivations, and are shaped by the social contexts in which we find ourselves. The positive or negative quality of an emotion determines its overall significance and influence. As a separate field of linguistic studies, emotive linguistics has accumulated a considerable array of knowledge about the verbal aspects of emotions, which are right in the center of our daily lives and interests (Niemeier, 1997). From the point of view of lexical semantics, the emotive meaning is an inseparable part of words' semantic structure; their specific semantic components form the emotionality of the word (Shahovskij, 2010, p. 6). In cognitive perspective, the language of emotions is an integrative format of representation of knowledge, which is the result of two main cognitive processes carried out through the language – conceptualization and categorization (Foolen, 2012). As Foolen (2012, pp. 363-364) claims,

*Emotions are (a) conceptualized in languages by a variety of word forms, with "literal" and figurative meaning, (b) can be expressed in a more direct way by prosody, morphology, syntactic constructions and by the use of figurative speech, and (c) are*

*foundational for processing language and its ontogenetic and phylogenetic genesis and development.*

Emotion is a fundamental aspect of human experience, shaping our perception, cognition, and actions. As a powerful storytelling medium, film excels at evoking a wide range of emotions in viewers. While much scholarly attention has focused on the linguistic construction of emotion in film dialogue, this article argues for a more comprehensive approach, exploring the intricate interplay of multimodal cues in eliciting negative feelings. By adopting a cognitive-pragmatic perspective, we aim to unravel how filmmakers leverage visual, sonic, and linguistic elements to craft compelling emotional experiences for their audiences.

Film, as a multimodal medium, relies on the synergistic interplay of visual, sonic, and linguistic elements to construct meaning and evoke emotional responses.

- **Visual Modalities:** Cinematography plays a crucial role in shaping emotional responses. Camera angles, movement, and framing can evoke feelings of claustrophobia, unease, or isolation. Lighting and color palettes further contribute to the emotional landscape, with dark, desaturated tones often associated with sadness, fear, or despair. Mise-en-scène, encompassing set design, props, and costume, provides further visual cues that inform our emotional understanding of the narrative.

- **Sonic Modalities:** Sound design is equally potent in shaping emotional experiences. Music, in particular, possesses a powerful emotive capacity, with specific musical motifs and instrumentation frequently employed to evoke fear, tension, sadness, or anger. Sound effects, from the subtle to the jarring, further heighten emotional impact, often working in tandem with visuals to create a visceral response in viewers.

- **Linguistic Modalities:** While dialogue explicitly communicates emotions through verbal expressions, it's crucial to acknowledge the interplay between language and other modalities. Tone of voice, pace, and pauses can drastically alter the emotional tenor of a scene, even when conveying seemingly neutral information.

**DISCUSSION** As Tan (1999) puts it, film is an 'emotion machine', where emotion scenarios are the basis for film emotions, which reflect the cognitive, linguistic, and cultural knowledge of filmmakers and film viewers (p. 70). Constructing the film character's emotional state, filmmakers relate them to the scenarios of emotions that exist in the viewers' minds and activate them. Emotions are prototypically organized and structured according to cognitive principles of film (Smith, 1999, p. 104).

Three semiotic resources jointly construct the film emotive meaning:

- the verbal resource, represented by the verbal language;
- the non-verbal resource including gestures, facial expression, prosody, etc.;
- the cinematographic resource, which includes the signs of the cinematographic nature – music, sound, lighting, camera movement.

Multimodality is treated as “modus operandi for conducting research for human communication, both mediated and face to face” (Seizov & Wildfeuer, 2018). In cinematic discourse, the process of emotive meaning making involves visual and acoustic modes, which interact producing different combinations aimed at actualizing the meaning sequences. It outlines the multimodal vector of cognitive-pragmatic analysis of negative emotions in film.

Mode, as G. Kress (2001) puts it, is “a socially defined and culturally conditioned resource for the process of meaning making” (p. 27), realized through perceptual modalities. The system of modes is versatile:

- the visual mode of cinematic discourse is represented by the image;
- the acoustic mode is realized through music, sound effects, etc.;
- the verbal component is presented in both modes in writing on the visual level and orally on the acoustic one.

The combination of modes varies in time and space producing semantic sequences. Therefore, a multimodal approach to the analysis of cinematic discourse focuses specifically on attracting the modes of film meaning making for the communication between filmmakers and viewers. It leads to considering cinematic discourse as an integral multimodal phenomenon; a combination of modes and semiotic resources generates and actualizes emotive meanings. The selection of modes is based on social and cultural factors related to the author's beliefs, cultural and social characteristics. Modes interact as “several modes are always used together, in modal ensembles, designed so that each mode has a specific task and function. Such ensembles are based on designs, that is, on selections and arrangements of resources for making a specific message about a particular issue for a particular audience” (Kress, 2010, p. 28).

**CONCLUSION** Constructing compelling negative emotions in film relies on a sophisticated interplay of multimodal cues, carefully orchestrated to elicit specific emotional responses. A cognitive-pragmatic perspective sheds light on the intricate mental processes involved in viewers' interpretation of these cues, highlighting the crucial role of embodied cognition, conceptual blending, and relevance theory in shaping our emotional engagement with cinematic narratives. By understanding these mechanisms, we gain a deeper appreciation for the power of film as a medium for exploring the complexities of human emotion.



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