



## LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS IN CINEMA DISCOURSE

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**Abstract:** *While it seems intuitive that emotions are purely physical, psychological constructionism argues that language is crucial for experiencing and understanding them. Specifically, the Conceptual Act Theory (CAT) proposes that emotions arise when bodily sensations are interpreted through learned emotional concepts, and language plays a key role in developing and accessing these concepts. The paper reviews developmental and cognitive evidence demonstrating how language helps humans build and use abstract emotion concepts throughout their lives. In essence, language scaffolds our understanding and experience of emotions.*

**Key words:** *the Conceptual Act Theory (CAT), cognitive, language, emotions, cinema discourse, concepts, Cognitive Appraisal Theory.*

According to cognitive appraisal theory, the appraisal of emotion antecedents drives response of physiological reactions, motor expression, and action

preparation (Frijda 1986; Lazarus 1991; Scherer and Ellgring 2007). For example,

anger may be produced by an act of another person, which is appraised as an

obstruction to reaching a goal, and is expressed with physiological changes (e.g.,

raised heart rate) and aggressive actions. These components thus form a scenario

or schema consisting of the appraisal of eliciting condition, subjective feeling

and reaction/expression.

**INTRODUCTION.** Cinema, a powerful medium for storytelling, relies not just on visuals but also on intricate linguistic artistry to convey the full spectrum of human emotion. While facial expressions, music, and cinematography contribute significantly to emotional impact, the language employed in film dialogues, voiceovers, and even on-screen text plays a crucial role in shaping audience perception and understanding of characters' inner lives. This exploration delves into the linguistic representation of emotions and feelings in cinema discourse,



examining how language choices, from lexicon and syntax to pragmatic nuances and stylistic devices, contribute to the creation and communication of emotional depth on screen. By analysing the interplay between language and other cinematic elements, we can uncover the subtle yet powerful ways in which films evoke empathy, elicit specific emotional responses, and ultimately, enrich the narrative experience. This introduction sets the stage for a deeper dive into the multifaceted landscape of emotional expression in film, considering how linguistic choices can amplify, nuance, and even contradict the emotions conveyed through other cinematic techniques.

**LITERARY REVIEW.** According to cognitive appraisal theory, the appraisal of emotion antecedents drives response of physiological reactions, motor expression, and action preparation (Frijda 1986; Lazarus 1991; Scherer and Ellgring 2007). For example, anger may be produced by an act of another person, which is appraised as an obstruction to reaching a goal, and is expressed with physiological changes (e.g., raised heart rate) and aggressive actions. These components thus form a scenario or schema consisting of the appraisal of eliciting condition, subjective feeling and reaction/expression. The CAT makes the unique prediction that language plays a role in emotion because language helps a person to initially acquire and then later support the representations that comprise emotion concept knowledge (Lindquist, 2013; cf., Lindquist et al., in press b). Of course, language likely plays a role in the acquisition and use of all category knowledge (see Lupyan, 2012a,b; Borghi and Binkofski, 2014).

**DISCUSSION.** However, we hypothesize that language is especially likely to be implicated in emotion because emotion concepts (e.g., anger, disgust, fear, etc.) are embodied and abstract representations that form populations of conceptual information rather than concrete concepts grounded by physical types that form prototypes for emotion category knowledge. Words for emotion categories (e.g., "anger," "disgust," "fear") thus serve as the "glue" or "essence place-holder" (cf., Xu, 2002) that helps bind together otherwise disparate instances of a given emotion category. Importantly, the CAT predicts that the aforementioned elements are domain-general elements of the mind and are not specific to the category of mental states called "emotions" (Barrett, 2009; Lindquist and Barrett, 2012; Barrett and Satpute, 2013; Lindquist, 2013). In essence, the CAT does not see "emotions" as states that are fundamentally distinct from "cognitions" or "perceptions" (cf., Barrett, 2009; Lindquist, 2013; e.g., Oosterwijk et al., 2012); all are constructed from the same basic elements and are nominal kind categories that exist because members of a culture agree that they share certain features (e.g., in English, "emotions" are typically thought to involve relatively greater involvement of the body than "thoughts," even if body states are in fact constitutive of both kinds of



mental states; e.g., Oosterwijk et al., 2012). The agreement between members of a culture imbues emotions with social reality—they are real even if the specific categories (e.g., anger, disgust, fear, sadness, pride, excitement, awe, etc.) are not inborn categories given by the structure of the nervous system (cf., Barrett, 2012). In this sense, the CAT and other constructionist views are quite distinct from other psychological and neuroscience models of emotion, which view emotions as domain-specific, inborn, inherited types that are fundamentally distinct from other types of mental states (e.g., "cognitions," "perceptions,"), and are produced by specific anatomically-given neural structures (i.e., emotions are natural kind categories; e.g., Cannon, 1921; Allport, 1924; Tomkins, 1962; Izard, 1971; Sprengelmeyer et al., 1996; Ekman and Cordaro, 2011; see Barrett, 2006b for a review)<sup>2</sup>. In such natural kind views, there is no role for language in the constitution of emotion (Ekman and Cordaro, 2011; Panksepp, 2011; Shariff and Tracy, 2011; Fontaine et al., 2013) and the role of language in the acquisition of emotion concepts should have no bearing on the actual experience or perception of emotion. The predictions of the CAT are thus quite novel in regard to emotions, even if they are more broadly consistent with other evidence that language generally supports the construction of "cognitive" mental states (e.g., Boroditsky, 2011; Lupyan, 2012a,b,c).

**RESULTS.** "Gone With the Wind" offers a rich tapestry of emotional expression through language, showcasing how cinematic discourse can represent complex feelings. Here are some examples focusing on different characters and emotional ranges:

1. Scarlett O'Hara's Defiance and Desire:

Example: "I'll think about that tomorrow. After all, tomorrow is another day." This iconic line demonstrates Scarlett's characteristic resilience and denial of unpleasant realities. The language is simple, yet powerful, reflecting her determination to postpone confronting her feelings of loss and uncertainty. It utilizes temporal deixis ("tomorrow") to push emotional reckoning into the future.

Example: "As God is my witness, they're not going to lick me. I'm going to live through this and when it's all over, I'll never be hungry again." This hyperbolic oath displays Scarlett's fierce survival instinct and ambition. The religious invocation adds weight to her declaration, emphasizing the depth of her resolve. The repetitive structure and strong verbs ("lick," "live," "hungry") reinforce her unwavering determination.

2. Rhett Butler's Cynicism and Hidden Vulnerability:

Example: "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn." This blunt declaration of indifference uses colloquialism ("damn") to express Rhett's weariness and frustration with Scarlett's manipulative behaviour. The stark simplicity of the



sentence contrasts sharply with the highly charged emotional context, highlighting his emotional detachment.

Example: "You should be kissed and often, and by someone who knows how." This seemingly playful line subtly reveals Rhett's underlying tenderness and desire for genuine connection with Scarlett. The use of passive voice ("should be kissed") softens the directness of his desire, while the qualifying clause ("by someone who knows how") hints at his awareness of Scarlett's emotional inexperience.

### 3. Melanie Hamilton's Gentleness and Compassion:

Example: "You're so brave, Scarlett. You're such a strong woman." Melanie's language is consistently kind and supportive, even when facing difficult circumstances. Her use of positive adjectives ("brave," "strong") reflects her genuine admiration for Scarlett, even when others criticize her. This consistent positivity emphasizes Melanie's inherent goodness.

Example: "Oh, dear, I do hope things will work out for the best." This expression of hope, utilizing polite interjections ("Oh, dear") and hedging ("I do hope"), exemplifies Melanie's gentle nature and tendency to avoid conflict. The phrasing reveals her optimism, even in the face of adversity.

These are just a few examples of how language contributes to the emotional depth of "Gone With the Wind." The film masterfully uses various linguistic techniques, including metaphors, hyperbole, colloquialisms, and tone, to portray the complex inner lives of its characters and enhance the narrative's emotional impact. Analyzing the language reveals the nuanced ways in which emotions are expressed and perceived within the cinematic context.

**CONCLUSION.** The linguistic landscape of cinema is a rich and complex terrain where words, interwoven with other cinematic elements, craft powerful emotional narratives. From the subtle nuances of intonation and word choice to the overt expression of feelings through dialogue and narration, language plays a crucial role in shaping audience perception and emotional engagement. The careful analysis of linguistic features in film, including figures of speech, pragmatic strategies, and stylistic choices, reveals the intricate mechanisms by which filmmakers evoke empathy, create tension, and ultimately, tell compelling stories that resonate with viewers on a deeply emotional level. This exploration has demonstrated that language in cinema is not merely a tool for conveying information but a powerful instrument for crafting emotional experiences. By understanding the interplay between language, visuals, and sound, we gain a deeper appreciation for the artistry of filmmaking and its ability to tap into the universal language of human emotion. Further research could explore the cultural variations in linguistic expression of emotions in cinema, as well as the impact of evolving language use on how emotions are represented on screen in the future.



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