NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH VISUAL STORYTELLING OF LEAVING HOME ANIMATED FILMS

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ABSTRACT. This study aims to describe visual storytelling in the animated film Leaving Home as a nonverbal communication medium that provides education to the audience. The power of nonverbal communication as a form of visual storytelling in the animated film Leaving Home is the researcher's motive to examine how a nonverbal animation can be interpreted universally. The nonverbal communication of the animated film Leaving Home embodies writing into moving images. An animator must have the ability to visual storytelling to make the imagination in telling stories (synopsis-text) into scripts (visual-written). An animator, also an animation film creator, must understand the rules of scriptwriting to communicate the message implied in his work. An excellent visual understanding will help an animator visualize the picture's language into an exciting story. The technique of conveying visual storytelling stories in animation sometimes finds obstacles in understanding the story due to improper use of visual language. This research uses qualitative methods to uncover the phenomenon of nonverbal communication through visual storytelling in the animated film Leaving Home to explain in more detail. The results showed that nonverbal communication is omnipresent, including nonverbal aspects of each communicative action. In the interactions seen in the story of the animated film Leaving Home, all its nonverbal channels come into play. This study also represents the imagination visualized in animated films as more hyperbolic. After conducting a study of nonverbal visual storytelling communication in the animated film Leaving Home, it can be concluded that films with animation techniques can be presented with visual storytelling packaged in an artistic visual language. So visual storytelling can be a literacy animation technique in conveying information and opening up opportunities for animation creators to communicate nonverbally to the audience.

KEYWORDS: visual storytelling; animated film; nonverbal communication; visual language; leaving home.

1 INTRODUCTION

Storytelling techniques in film continue to evolve along with the rapid development of the film industry. Especially in animated films, experimental animation works were born that aimed to develop visualization techniques and storytelling techniques in animation. Storytelling techniques in animation create a digital representation of a story by utilizing first-person images and narratives (Choi, 2018; Lambert, 2010). The emergence of animation works that prioritize visual language over verbal language makes the storytelling techniques in animation richer and more diverse. Animated storytelling techniques represent the process of communicating integral parts of a narrative across different channels of visualization delivery to bring a scene to life (Buehring & Vittachi, 2020). However, the animation is also inseparable from dialogue and narration as an introduction to the story to the audience. The presence of animated works with storytelling techniques often referred to as nonverbal visual storytelling is exciting because it is not easy to convey a message only with visual language. The author must share insight or information with the audience to share a vision of the scene (Patricia et al., 2018). It takes intelligence and understanding of visual language to write stories with nonverbal visual storytelling techniques. The human brain can understand the choice of visual language in general. It can be used as imagination to visualize it in the form of animated comedy films, dramas, horror, and so on.

Visual storytelling presents more robust visual data because it stimulates our reasoning and makes our brain think to understand visual language and new information to keep in mind (Botsis et al., 2020).

Visual storytelling consists of two words, namely visual and storytelling. Visuals are something that can be seen with the eye. The power of visual images can tell without the help of words and can lead the viewer to interpret the things depicted (Sibierska, 2017). At the same time, storytelling is a form of communication that emphasizes the story. Storytelling is an essential part of ancient and modern culture, critically dependent on the ability to convey certain narratives (complex tasks in communication) (Meo et al., 2019). Storytelling is a way of communicating a specific identity or event in which images, photos, videos and images are used. Instead, the narrative used consists of verbal narration of the image; in other words, the photo is not enough to tell a story (Widianingsih & Cahyani, 2020). From the review above, visual storytelling communicates through various forms, such as film, comics, photo graphics, and advertisements. Visual storytelling is also used for various purposes, for example, to entertain, inform, and persuade (Williams, 2019).

The stages of designing visual storytelling start from the story idea being well conceptualized, and then the author will write synoptically. The synopsis is a selling tool that tells the scene from beginning to end, including the ending briefly (Patricia et al., 2018). At this stage, the author must be able to imagine the visual language written in the script and then visualize it in the form of a storyboard. The selection of visual languages such as facial expressions, gestures, and symbols used to communicate information is very important and has a vital role. Not all information you want to convey can be communicated using expressions or gestures. Information also requires a symbolic language, such as those in animated films, as a medium for conveying messages. Animated scenes are created from continuous images to visualize a movement. Animation is a series of images arranged sequentially or known as frames. One frame consists of one image. If the image arrangement is displayed alternately with a specific time, it will appear moving. The unit used is frames per second (fps). Suppose the animation is set to 25 fps means that the animation consists of 25 images in one second. The greater the fps value, the smoother the animation will be formed (Kusuma et al., 2013).

This study examines nonverbal communication in the film Leaving Home Animation by Joost Lieuwma. The animated film is entirely packed with nonverbal visual storytelling techniques to convey the audience's story message. Nonverbal communication is communication through sending and receiving wordless cues (Burgoon et al., 2016; Fesharaki, 2019). In line with the first scientific study of nonverbal communication, which can be seen in Charles Darwin's book, The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals, non-verbal communication plays a significant role in daily interactions with others (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). It is reiterated that verbal communication will be less effective if it is not accompanied by nonverbal messages. This animated film tells the story of a teenager who grows up and then is asked to be independent by both parents. To leave home to seek life experience, but the teenager feels that he does not want to leave the house yet. There was a strong push, and finally, the teenager left the house, but in the middle of the road, a reason appeared for him to return to his parents' house. His father told him to leave again every time he returned until he ultimately left the house after his mother died. This story is made with comedic elements, but there are scenes where we can feel a deep sadness and dissolve into the story. Although the story in the animated film entirely uses nonverbal communication based on arbitrary symbols that differ from one culture to another, to some iconic degree, it can still be understood universally.

2   METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods. The author uses qualitative research methods to reveal the phenomenon of nonverbal communication through visual storytelling in the animated film Leaving Home. Qualitative research can provide an overview of the representation of the film's meaning in detail (Orellia & Prawira, 2021). Part of the analysis in this study is a snippet of several nonverbal visual storytelling scenes from the animated film Leaving Home by observing essential elements, such as messages conveyed through motion and messages conveyed through character expression. To obtain the primary data that is the focus of this study, researchers used audio-visual material, namely analyzing animated films on YouTube through link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTB61iR6cVQ&t=174s. The animated film is 6 minutes and 36 seconds long. Audio-visual data can be a non-prominent method in the data collection process, but it can also provide an opportunity to share experiences directly

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, researchers also conduct literature studies relevant to the subjects studied in the animated film Leaving Home to provide an overview of sufficient data to support research analysis.

3   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The delivery of an exciting story in animation is an absolute aspect. Animation storytelling techniques with dialogue and narrative will undoubtedly be readily accepted by the audience as the audience when the visuals are broadcast. The narrative and dialogue stimulate the audience to understand the story. But of course, it will be different from visual storytelling techniques where the delivery of the story requires visual language in facial expressions, gestures, and body language. In addition, the language of symbols in animation is used to help explain important information in the story so that it can be communicated well to the audience.

The visual language in the animated film Leaving Home guides the audience to understand the information conveyed nonverbally. Nonverbal communication is omnipresent, which includes nonverbal aspects in every communicative action. In the interactions seen in the story of the animated film Leaving Home, all its nonverbal channels come into play. The body, face, voice, appearance, touch, distance, time, and physical environment all play a role in creating communication. Nonverbal communication indicates that a person can interpret any behaviour as a nonverbal message (Burgoon et al., 2016). A form of nonverbal communication that is easy to interpret makes the work of this Leaving Home animated film different from animation in general. The imagination visualized in animated films is more hyperbole. The use of gestures and expressions becomes more lively when performing a scene that explains something so that we can feel cuteness, ridiculousness, sadness and loneliness.

Researchers present some visuals of nonverbal communication forms by displaying scenes with artistic elements. Nonverbal communication that is strong enough to display visual language symbols can explain the information conveyed. Visual storytelling has the potential to see and be seen in a way contrary to the dominant hegemonic structure (Elers et al., 2021). The figure below depicts the character of each character, in contrast, namely the figures of the father, mother, and teenage son.

Figure 1: scenes of father, son and mother characters (minute to 01:15)

The scene in figure 1 (Lieuwma, n.d.) presents the father's character carrying a stick with a package of provisions tied to the standing in front of the door while allowing his adult son to leave. This scene is a continuation of the previous scene featuring the character of his son, whose mother still assists in smearing jam on his bread. So the father's character responded by giving a parcel containing a cane and a package of provisions that his son would take to leave. Then the father's character demonstrates how to use the stick and the provisioning package. The visualization of this scene has a deep meaning even though it is visualized. Body language with an open left-hand gesture can be interpreted as a gesture of allowing his teenager to leave the house. The following discussion is the scene where teenagers tell stories when they return home, as shown below.

Figure 2: the teenage character tells his father and mother why he returned (minute to 02:02)

In figure 2 (Lieuwma, n.d.), the teenage character explains visually to his father and mother why he can return home. This scene visualizes how the teenage character explains the hurricane flying him to the house. Verbally it may take dialogue and a few sentences to tell this information. What's interesting, however, is the use of visual symbols of animated balloons and large wind scenes that fly teenage characters that can convey information to the audience. The next scene that is quite absurd is when a UFO abducts a teenager, as in the picture below.
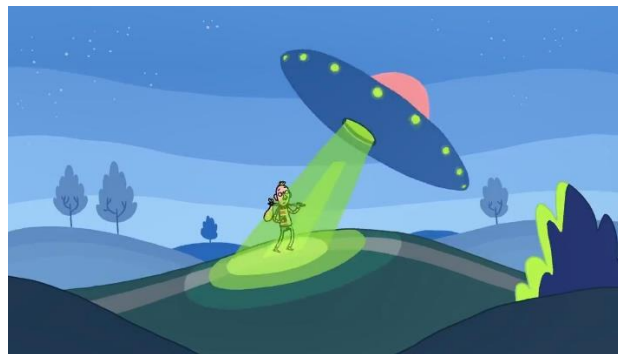

Figure 3: teenage character kidnapped UFO (minute to 04:14)

Figure 3 (Lieuwma, n.d.) visualizes the imaginary story of a teenage character being kidnapped by a UFO as the reason he can return home. The scene's message is that the teenage character does not want to leave home to live independently and make an absurd story. Some scenes of teenage characters returning home are visualized comically but do not detract from the essence of the message they want to communicate. The fourth discussion is when the teenager returns home and enters the aquarium jar as follows in the picture below.

Figure 4: teen character in aquarium jar (minute to 04:23)

Figure 4 (Lieuwma, n.d.) presents a very intriguing and funny scene; that is, the teenage character is in the jar of the aquarium. This scene is a continuation of the teenage character who, every time he returns

home, he will be asked by his father to leave the house again. In the scene, halfway through, the teenager stops at the pool and enters the pool. Then the scene is spliced with the scene at the minute to 04:23. The visualization of this scene wants to communicate the reasoning of the teenager who describes him returning home after he fell into a deep. Suddenly he was already in the jar of the aquarium in his house. The last discussion is when you are at the mother's grave, as shown below.

Figure 5: mother's funeral (minute to 05:00)

Figure 5 (Lieuwma, n.d.) depicts the father's character and the teenage character in front of his mother's grave. This scene continues the previous scene, which visualizes the mother's character having a heart attack. The father is furious to see his son, who does not want to leave the house. This scene communicates essential learning about teenage adulthood and independent life.

4   CONCLUSION

After conducting a study of non-verbal visual storytelling communication in the animated film Leaving Home, it can be concluded that films with animation techniques can be presented with visual storytelling packaged in an artistic visual language. Visual language with a nonverbal communication approach can be a technical literacy in conveying information and communicating with the audience. Conveying information and communication is not only verbal or written but can be presented through nonverbal visual language. The novelty in presenting a story in an animated film is not only through the technique of making animation but can be done through the delivery of a story that is more creative and can be understood by all circles through a simple method, namely without dialogue. Information delivery and communication can be presented through visual language, facial expression, body language, sound effects, and music illustrations. Watching the film is closely related to knowledge and intelligence; if being a viewer, of course, you must be able to digest the information conveyed through the film so that the message conveyed can be understood. Leaving Home's animated film is full of messages about independence, about a person growing up and leaving his parents' house, presented in a comedic manner with brilliant visual language, without narration and dialogue.

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