



Appraising Emotions and Interpersonal Meaning in Contemporary Disney Animated Films for Children

Nada AlJamal
PhD Applied Linguistics

Objectives

Explore how Disney films construct interpersonal meaning through Appraisal Theory

Identify dominant Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation patterns

Discuss how evaluative language supports emotional literacy and language acquisition



Research Background

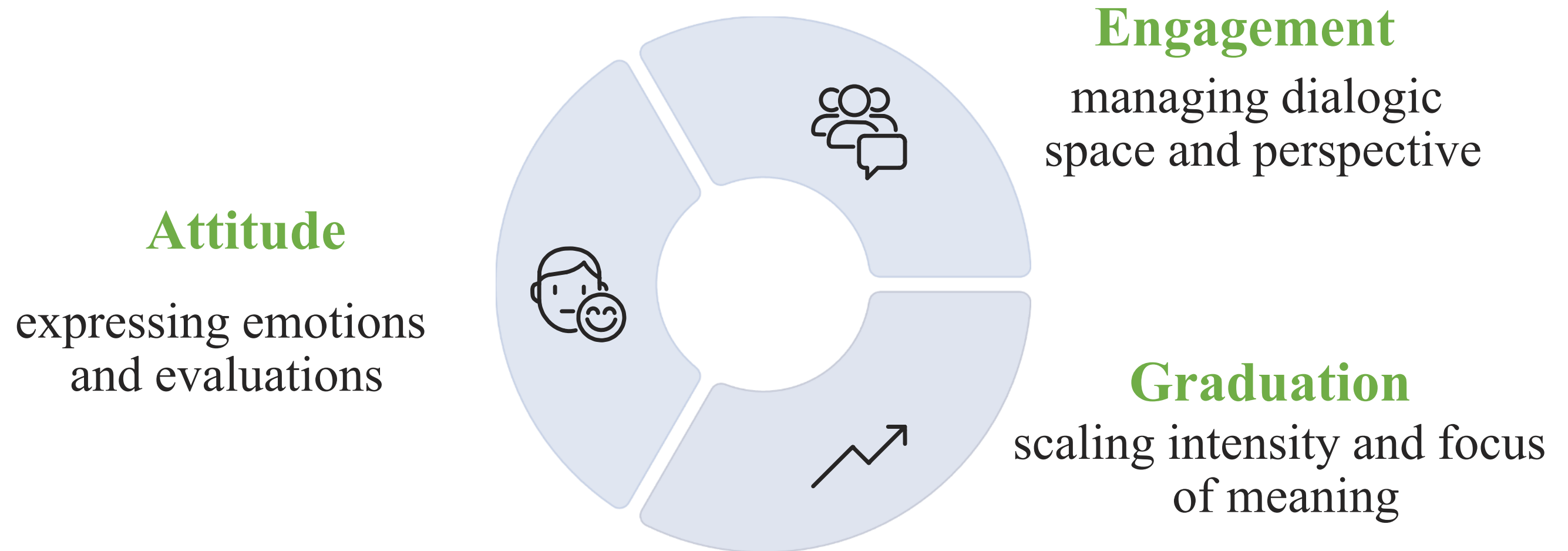
- **Children's animated films** → early exposure to **emotion & interaction**

"Disney's animated films operate on many registers, but one of the most persuasive is their role as 'teaching machines.'"
(Giroux & Pollock, 2010; p. 91)

- **Appraisal Theory** (Martin & White, 2005) → framework for evaluation & stance
- **Research Gap:** few studies analyze full-length animated films as linguistic input

Theoretical Framework

Appraisal Theory Systems



Research Questions

01

How are appraisal resources distributed across subsystems?

02

How do they shape narrative and emotional meaning?

03

What does appraisal density reveal about input to child audiences?

Corpus

Seven Films (2015–2024)



- Total = 63,733 words (CC subtitles)
- 26,149 appraisal tokens

Methodology Overview

-  — **Tool:** Appraisal Theory Tagger (Alshehri et al., 2025)
-  — **Process:** automatic + manual verification of monoglossic clauses
-  — **Focus:** verbal tokens of Attitude, Engagement, Graduation

Reliability & Validity

Hybrid approach

Reduces tagging errors

Construct validity

Based on SFL Appraisal framework

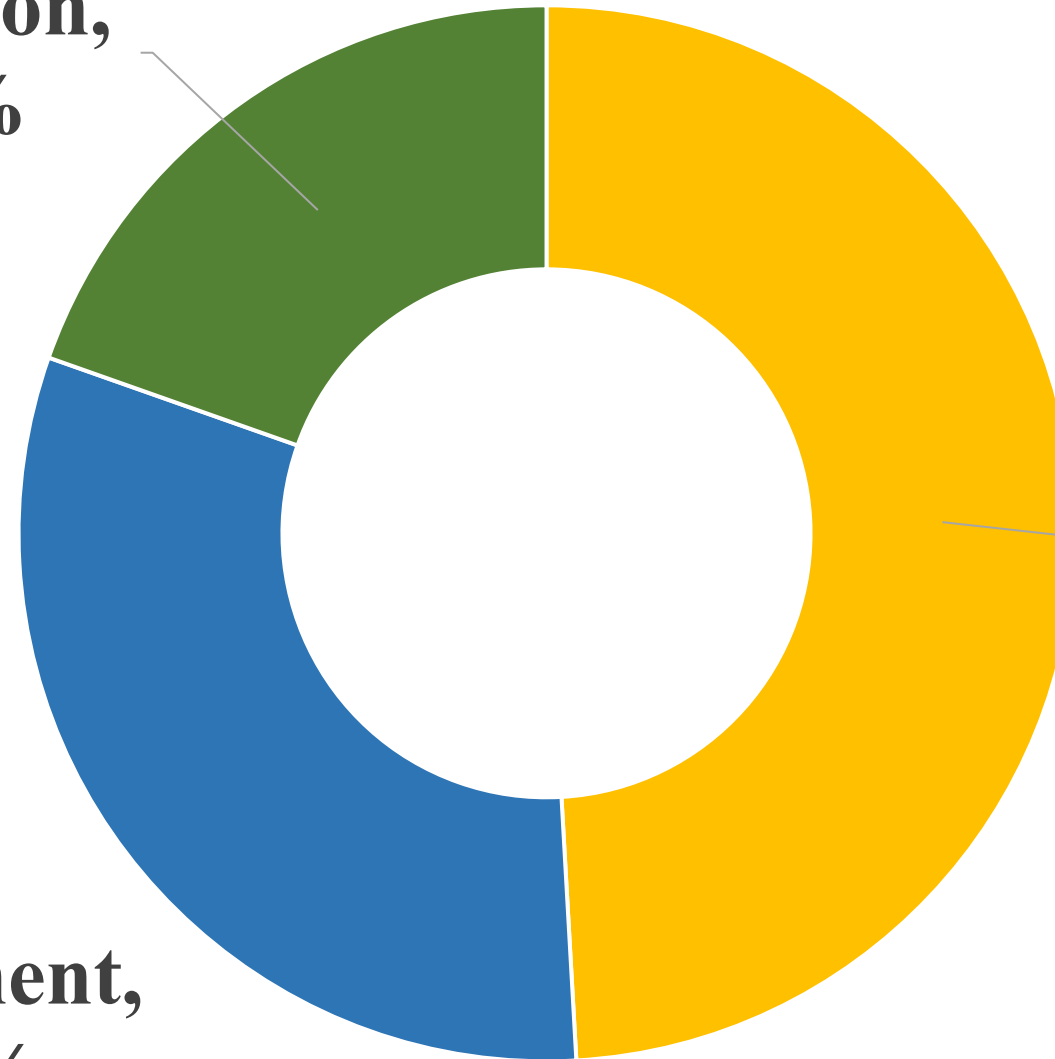
Limitation

Dialogue only, no visual or prosodic data

Overall Findings

Appraisal Distribution

Graduation,
19.60%



Attitude,
49.10%

Engagement,
31.30%

→ Children's media = rich source of evaluative input

Subsystems by Film



Attitude highest in *Inside Out 2* (60.7 %)



Engagement highest in *Inside Out* (41 %) and *Elemental* (39.9 %)



Graduation notable in *Inside Out 2* (26.1 %) & *Moana 2* (20.2 %)



Attitude in Focus

- Dominant subsystem across all films
- Expresses **feelings, judgments, values**
- Supports emotional labeling and moral learning



Engagement in Focus

Reflects dialogic negotiation and perspective-taking

High in *Elemental* → intercultural dialogue

Lower in *Inside Out 2* → more didactic tone



Graduation in Focus

- Intensifies emotions and drama
- *Moana 2* & *Inside Out 2* use frequent intensifiers → energy & conflict
- *Wish* softens tone → hope and reflection

Appraisal Density

479.6

Luca

Highest density

468

Elemental

Second highest

391.6

Inside Out 2

Lower density

→ Dense films = richer linguistic input for children

Interpretation



Attitude

emotional and moral lexis



Engagement

perspective and dialogue



Graduation

emotional intensity and focus

→ Together, they model socioemotional language for young audiences

Linking Themes & Subsystems

Film	Central Theme	Dominant Subsystem
Moana	Heroic quest	Attitude
Wish	Hope & moral values	Attitude
Elemental	Intercultural negotiation	Engagement
Inside Out	Internal debate	Engagement
Luca	Friendship & identity	Attitude + Engagement
Inside Out 2	Adolescence & anxiety	Attitude + Graduation
Moana 2	Heroism & resilience	Attitude + Graduation

Implications for Applied Linguistics

-  Animated films as semiotic learning environments
-  Scaffolding for emotion vocabulary and stance-taking
-  Pedagogical potential in EFL and socioemotional education

Future Work

- Focus on multimodal and cross-linguistic corpora

Conclusion

- Disney films are dense with evaluation and stance
- Attitude dominant → emotion and morality
- Appraisal density reveals input richness for language learning
- Films = tools for emotional and linguistic literacy

Thank you for listening



Nada AlJamal

email: Aljamalnh@gmail.com

LinkedIn: [@aljamalnh](https://www.linkedin.com/company/@aljamalnh)