Psycholinguistic and Cognitive-Semiotic Dimensions of Constructing Fear in Horror Films: A Multimodal Perspective

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Abstract. This article addresses an integrative psycholinguistic and cognitive-semiotic perspective on constructing fear in English horror films. At the heart of constructing fear in horror film is the filmmakers' presumption that viewers can potentially share their joint intention with the filmmakers, can share joint attention, and, as a result, share joint emotion. Drawing on the theory of intersubjectivity, fear in horror films emerges as the result of joint attention between filmmakers and viewers. Fear is viewed as a multimodal construct resulting from the synergistic integration of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources via audial and visual modes. Each semiotic resource contributes to meaning-making by employing elements specific to horror films. The verbal system contains interjections, descriptive words, emotion-laden words, pleas for help, and violation of the sentence structure. The nonverbal elements include a contorted face, screaming, chaotic gestures, shaking, or stupor. The cinematic resource possesses the meaning-making potential to highlight various aspects of filmic fear through close-ups and middle close-ups, camera angles, dim light, and non-linear disturbing music. The meanings constructed by semiotic elements interact through cross-mapping, contributing to the formation of multimodal blends, which emerge in conceptual integration. Multimodal blends of fear in horror films include two-/three-component, non-parity, and consecutive patterns. From the viewers' perspective, fear in horror films is perceived as a whole entity with a different level of intensity: from anxiety to horror. The experiment results show that the main indicators of fear for both males and females are pleas for help, voice and facial expressions, and music and close-up. However, when watching horror films, males feel interested more, while females experience negative emotions of fear, disgust, and tension.

Keywords: *fear, horror film, meaning-making, multimodal blend, semiotic resource.*

Крисанова Тетяна. Психолінгвістичний і когнітивно-семіотичний виміри конструювання страху у фільмах жахів: мультимодальний аспект.

Анотація. У статті розглянуто інтегративний психолінгвістичний та когнітивно-семіотичний підхід до конструювання страху в англомовних фільмах жахів. В основі конструювання страху у фільмі жахів лежить припущення режисерів, що глядачі потенційно здатні до спільної інтенції та спільної уваги з творцями фільму, та, як наслідок, спроможні переживати спільні емоції. Спираючись на теорію інтерсуб'єктивності, страх у фільмах жахів виникає як результат спільної уваги творців фільму і глядачів. Він постає як мультимодальний конструкт, результат синергійної інтеграції вербальних, невербальних і кінематографічних

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семіотичних ресурсів через аудіальний і візуальний модуси. Кожен семіотичний ресурс робить свій внесок у конструювання смислу, залучаючи специфічні для фільмів жахів елементи. Вербальний ресурс містить вигуки, описові та емоційно навантажені лексичні одиниці, благання про допомогу, порушення структури речення. Невербальні елементи включають спотворене обличчя, крик, хаотичні жести, тремтіння або ступор. Кінематографічний ресурс має смислотворчий потенціал, висвітлюючи різні аспекти страху за допомогою крупного та середнього планів, ракурсів камери, тьмяного світла та нелінійної тривожної музики. Смисли, сконструйовані семіотичними елементами, взаємодіють один з одним через перехресне мапування, сприяючи формуванню мультимодальних блендів, які виникають у процесі концептуальної інтеграції. Мультимодальні бленди страху у фільмах жахів уключають дво-/трикомпонентні, непаритетні та послідовні моделі. З погляду глядача, страх у фільмах жахів реконструюється як мультимодальна єдність з різним рівнем інтенсивності: від тривоги до жаху. Результати експерименту демонструють, що головними показниками страху як для чоловіків, так і для жінок є благання про допомогу, голос і міміка, а також музика і крупний план. Однак під час перегляду фільмів жахів чоловіки відчувають більший інтерес, в той час як жінки переживають негативні емоції страху, огиди та напруги.

Ключові слова: *мультимодальний бленд, семіотичний ресурс, страх, смислотворення, фільм жахів.*

Introduction

Emotive meaning-making is an urgent topic for many fields of science as emotions play a great role in all spheres of a human life. They are viewed as "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) and both the basis for cognitive processes (Foolen, 2012, p. 348) as well as for discursive practice (Bamberg, 1997, p. 310) directly or indirectly linked to language (Foolen, 2012, p. 350). These findings signal the tight connection of emotions with human cognition, social environment, body, and language, which allows us to interpret them as social constructs.

Special attention to emotions and their correlation with human verbal and nonverbal behavior has been given in psycholinguistics. Berkum (2018) presents a theory of language processing which accommodates verbal and non-verbal elements in constructing emotions in social activity. Zasiekina and Zasiekin (2020) study the link between anxiety, anger, and sadness and dependent variable of moral emotions represented in traumatic narratives. Rahmani et al. (2019) analyse the correlation between emotional experiences and their linguistic interpretation among tourists. However, there are very few papers demonstrating the interconnection of verbal and nonverbal elements in emotive meaning-making in film.

The aim of the article is to reveal the psycholinguistic and cognitive-semiotic aspects of multimodal construction of fear in horror films by filmmakers and viewers. Its psycholinguistic dimension is represented by the intersubjective approach to the interaction of filmmakers and viewers grounded on their shared knowledge about the world. This enables us to view them as participants who are involved in the mutual experience of on-screen events and jointly take part in (re)constructing meanings. Zlatev claims that "sharing of experiences is not only, and not primarily, on a

cognitive level, but also (and more basically) on the level of affect, perceptual processes and conative (action-oriented) engagements" (Zlatev et al., 2008, p. 1–3).

The intersubjective nature of the filmmakers-viewers relationship consists in the desire of the former to make a film for the latter, to share their experience with them, to gain understanding, and to cause the same emotion. This focuses on the filmmakers' intention to construct emotive meaning in film and viewers' intention to reconstruct it. As Osgood (1963) argues, psycholinguistics deals with the processes of encoding and decoding, since they correlate the state of speakers' messages with the state of listeners.

In cognitive-semiotic perspective, emotions are socially constructed and culturally dependent. People have the innate ability to conceptualize emotions, and in this respect cognition serves as a mediator between language and emotion. However, emotions are not responses to internal and external stimuli but rather dynamic processes as they are constructed by human brain (Barret, 2017). The cognitive-semiotic dimension of this research stresses the integration of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources in the dynamic process of constructing fear in horror films. The use of multisemiotic elements in emotive meaning-making underlines the multimodal perspective of this research.

Fear is a fundamental emotion, which is an integral part of human existence (Izard, 1991, p. 357). It occupies a central role in cinematography reflecting the "eternal desire of a human to escape from an imaginary or real danger to their health and well-being and to survive" (Izard, 1991, p. 359). Filmic fear "encompasses a number of emotional states that are sufficiently close to each other as well as to prototypical fear in everyday life" (Hanich, 2012, p. 19).

Horror films are the environment for constructing fear: they not only represent situations that can potentially cause fear in everyday life, but are also able to reflect subconscious fears related in film to monsters, hereafter, religious beliefs, etc. Via the representation of disturbing and dark subject matter, they seek to elicit responses of fear, terror, disgust, shock, suspense, and, of course, horror from their viewers (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012). Some researchers believe that horror films evoke pleasurable fear, while others claim the state of catharsis that occurs during their viewing (Hanich, 2012, p. 9–11). The specificity of horror films lies in their ability to highlight those manifestations of fear that are characteristic of situations of mortal danger, which can terrify a person or put them in a state of panic fear. It enables us to trace what semiotic elements are important for the human mind in the process of fear construction.

A significant number of works in psychology, psycholinguistics, and neuroscience focus on researching fear in horror films emphasizing various aspects of viewers' reaction. The feelings caused by viewing horror in films comprise empathy (Hall & Bracken, 2011), distress and fright (Hoffner & Levine, 2005), enjoyment and thrill (Sparks et al.,2005), while the latter are more frequent among males (Clasen et al., 2020). One more sensitive reaction to fear in horror films is disgust, which is

viewed as a protective response to an imaginary or direct threat (Kendall, 2011; Krusemark & Li, 2011). However, the typical response to horror film is fear and anxiety as they motivate people to escape in order to survive (Mineka & Öhman, 2002).

The attention of researchers was also attracted by the viewers' behavioral reaction to horror films manifested in heart rate deceleration and the feeling of freezing (Hagenaars et al., 2014) or film-specific anxieties, such as fear of swimming or walking in twilight, which influence the viewers' everyday life (Cantor, 2004). Some studies claim the impact of watching horror films on mental health, namely the development of so-called cinematic neuroses (Ballon & Leszcz, 2007). The impact of cinematic devices, such as non-diegetic music and sounds, finds its realization in affective modulation of the startle reflex, which reflects a person's emotional reaction to threat (Bradley et al., 2018, Roy et al., 2009).

However, these works are largely focused on the study of the viewers' reaction, without paying attention to the filmmakers' intention in the process of constructing filmic fear. The multimodal means of constructing fear in horror films, which make the impact on the perceptual sphere of viewers, are also insufficiently studied.

There are few works on multimodal accounts of emotive meaning-making in film. Feng and O'Halloran (2013) examine how emotive meaning is represented in visual images using nonverbal semiotic resources, Krysanova and Shevchenko (2021) study conceptual blending in multimodal construction of negative emotions in film, while Hanich (2012) provides a phenomenological approach to constructing cinematic emotions in horror films.

Filmic emotions are not real, but "they are intended to create the illusion of real emotions" (Koning, 2000, p. 34), organizing the viewers' perception. On-screen fear is constructed by the collective filmmakers, imitated and embodied by actors through sensory-perceptual manifestations and behavioral patterns and, finally, reconstructed by the audience. Viewers and filmmakers are able to share joint attention and joint emotions through the moving camera as "the moving camera is not only a mechanical instrument, an object of visual and kinetic perception; it is also a subject that sees and moves and expresses perception" (Branigan, 2013).

In this article, firstly, I analyse the construction of fear from the filmmakers' perspective and single out verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources employed to construct fear in horror films. Next, I determine their meaning-making potential and distinguish multimodal patterns of their combination. Then, I experimentally examine how the audience reconstruct fear in the film.

Method

Film reflects the perception of the world by a human: thinking from an image to the reality and vice versa. This demonstrates the ability of film to construct the

objective world employing specific semiotic means as well as affect viewers by immersing them into the world of diegesis.

From the perspective of the integrated approach applied in this study, emotive meaning-making is viewed as a dynamic and enactive phenomenon, which is based on the intersubjective interaction of filmmakers and viewers. The meaning is constructed 'on-line' and is emergent as any change of the semiotic element affects the process of meaning-making and leads to the construction of a new meaning.

The corpus of this research comprises 250 episodes of constructing fear in 17 American horror films from 2000 to 2021 (see Appendix). These episodes contain the elements of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic systems transmitted through audial and visual modes. In order to single out the episode for analysis in the film, I involved a corresponding screenplay that can be considered as a basic model of the film. The lexeme *fear* and its synonyms used in the screenplay as indicators of the character's negative emotion made it possible to consider the emotion in the corresponding film episode. The following words and their derivatives, selected from English lexicographic sources (Cambridge Dictionary Online, Collins English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary), were employed to denote fear in the screenplay: *agitation, affright, alarm, angst, anxiety, apprehension, apprehensiveness, awe, consternation, creeps, dismay, disquiet, disquietude, disturbance, dread, fear, fearfulness, frenzy, fright, funk, foreboding, heebie-jeebies, horror, hysteria, jitters, misgiving, mistrust, panic, perturbation, premonition, presage, presentiment, phobia, qualm, scare, shock, shivers, terror, trepidation, trepidity, unease, uneasiness.*

The selection of the material goes through several steps. Firstly, appropriate episodes in which fear is intended are selected using the lexical means of nomination in the screenplay. Then, if the corresponding film scene contains the construction of fear, it is analysed in terms of verbal, non-verbal, and cinematic means. Next, examples are supplemented by the description of nonverbal and cinematic resources and, if required, are accompanied by screenshots of corresponding video fragments released on the Internet. This makes it possible to ensure the objectivity of the analysis and identify fear in film.

Consider example 1 from the horror film *Case 39*. Hoping to get rid of the demon, Emily gets into the car and meets the demon in the guise of a girl. She feels fear, which is indicated by the noun *scare* in the screenplay. The example contains the description of Emily's nonverbal behavior given in the screenplay and realized on the screen. The Emily's frightened actions on the screen coincide with the screenplay's description and are complemented by her contorted face, bulging eyes, and a paralysed posture in film. The cinematic elements employed in this episode include the close-up of Emily's face, the dim light, and non-diegetic music.

*(1) Emily throws the suitcase in the trunk. Slams it shut. Comes around to the driver's side door. Jumps in. Closes the door. And gets the **scare** of her life. Lucy is sitting in the passenger seat! Emily recoils with a scream, throwing her body against the window behind her.* (Wright, 2006)

In order to illustrate the multimodal issues of constructing fear, it is employed the case study of two horror films: *The Grudge* and *Case 39*. The 2004 American-Japanese horror film *The Grudge* describes encounters with a curse that is born when someone dies in extreme rage or sorrow. The curse is reborn repeatedly provoking a constant chain of deaths and horror. The 2009 American supernatural horror film *Case 39* tells the story about a young and trusting social worker Emily who saves a 10-year-old girl from her abusive parents. She later learns that the child is a demon that feeds on human fears.

The approach applied in this study presupposes the procedure of the analysis, which comprises three stages. The first stage focuses on the determination of the elements of different semiotic systems, which construct fear in horror films through audial and visual modes. In the theory of multimodality, audial and visual modes are viewed as channels of perception related to the way a human perceives material objects through hearing, observing, or feeling them (Bateman & Schmidt, 2012). The modes in film contain elements of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources. They are viewed as socially conditioned communicative resources that construct social, individual, affective, meanings due to the needs of a particular community (Leeuwen, 2006). Each semiotic resource in film is characterized by the set of specific means inherent only to it. The verbal semiotic resource contains lexical and syntactic means of constructing fear. The nonverbal semiotic resource is characterized by a wide range of facial expressions, voice changes, and gesture and body movements. The cinematic semiotic resource has a significant variety of elements including camera shot size, camera angles, light, and sound techniques.

Although all elements possess the meaning-making potential, they construct fear only in the multisemiotic integration. Therefore, the second stage aims to determine patterns of combination of multisemiotic elements on the basis of cognitive-semiotic criteria. Different semiotic resources interact in film creating multimodal blends, which make semantic sequences that can only be analyzed in their dynamics. In order to explain how meaningful elements are combined, I employ the theory of conceptual integration (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003). Cognitive operations connect language and mind, enabling the construction of new meanings on the basis of already existing ones.

Film combines two views on fear as a joint object: the filmmakers' and the viewers'. This emphasizes the intersubjective nature of constructing fear in horror films. Filmmakers include all agents involved in creating film: scriptwriter, producer, director, cameraman, actor, etc., since they intend and construct the emotive meaning on the screen. Collective film recipients comprise target film audience with their socio-cultural, gender, ethnic characteristics, which are taken into consideration in film making.

At the heart of constructing fear in film is the filmmakers' presumption that viewers can potentially share their joint intention with the filmmakers, are able to share joint attention, and, as a result, share joint emotion. The camera, although a

mechanical object, provides the integration of filmmakers' and recipients' views and guides joint attention. The filmmakers are not the only creators of film meanings; the viewers also take an active part interpreting and reconstructing emotions based on their shared experience.

The third stage of the study focuses on the reconstruction of fear by film viewers. To achieve this goal, I conducted the experiment involving 50 participants, 25 of whom were males and 25 females. The participants watched 30 horror film episodes from 8 horror films and provided answers to survey questions regarding the role of semiotic components in constructing fear. In the scene of joint attention, according to Turner, communicants realize that they jointly pay attention to a certain object, they interact with each other, jointly participating in this activity, even if they do not communicate about it (Turner, 2017, p. 1).

Therefore, the specificity of filmmakers-viewers interaction comes to the fore in the process of meaning-making. I claim that filmmakers and viewers, despite their remoteness in time and distance, are able to co-participate in (re)constructing fear, which may be explained in terms of intersubjectivity. This participation is based on the identification of viewers with film characters (Smith, 2003, p. 127–129) and reflects their ability to feel the same emotions and experience them. Emotional associations are connected not only with the play of actors, but also with words, gestures, music, colour, sound, light, as they are 'tied' to certain emotions, thoughts, beliefs as well as to physiological reactions.

Thus, the following research questions arise in this study: what are the typical verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources employed by filmmakers to construct fear in horror films; what is their meaning-making potential; how do they integrate creating multimodal blends; and how do viewers reconstruct fear in horror films.

Results and Discussion

Semiotic Resources of Constructing Fear in Horror Films

The multimodal construction of fear in film is based on its biological, social, and cultural aspects. Characteristic of fear in film is the variety of its forms – from the feeling of anxiety to terror including both sthenic (active and attacking) and asthenic (passive and defensive) types. The former consists in the ability to mobilize human forces for immediate activity directed to reduce the risk of becoming a victim. The latter is manifested in the protective neurobiological reaction of a human to real or imaginary danger and is associated with immobility, muscles tension or physiological manifestations.

Emotion exists in film as an integral audiovisual entity, embodied through the synergistic combination of multisemiotic elements. Embodiment, according to Damasio (1994), is based on images that exist in the human mind. The form of these images is not important: they can be formed with the help of colours, movements,

voice, or words and are based on sensory perception of the world, which links them with physicality.

Fear in film emerges through the representational relations between the bodily sign and the action, object, or word to which it refers. In Coëgnarts's parlance, "meaning is a form of derived embodied thought" (Coëgnarts, 2017, p.1), which may be realized by various semiotic resources. Accordingly, the actor's voice, body movements, film dialogue, or images contribute to the on-screen construction of fear. Semiotic marking of fear occurs on two planes: on the plane of film - through the audiovisual semantic unity, and on the plane of the verbal text of the screenplay through the description of the relevant elements.

The nonverbal semiotic resource is represented by the characters' mimics, gestures, and voice. In horror films, it is characterized by a wide range of devices. The most typical indicators of fear are facial expressions. The semiotization of fear occurs through the gaze when eyes are wide open and goggled, as indicated in the screenplay: *eyes go big with fear, eyes bulging with panic*. They may be firmly shut: *his eyes closed in fear, covers his eyes in fear* or filled with tears: *eyes water in pain and fear*. The gaze is "frozen" under the awareness of mortal danger: *stares in horror, panicked look*. The face of a person experiencing fear is distorted, motionless, white, red, or darkened: *face is a mask of shock and fear, pasty white with fear*. The lips may be trembling or tightly compressed, the mouth jerks: *jaw drops as total fear storms her face, mouth twitching in fear*.

Voice is a vivid indicator of fear implementing physiological processes peculiar for this emotion. Voice may quaver, decrease, or become hoarse, realizing the asthenic form of fear: *tremor of fear in his voice, voice is defiant but cracking with fear*. Screaming and shrieking are, in contrast, characteristic to the sthenic form: *shriek with fear, scream in fear*.

Gestures and body movements also implement sthenic and asthenic forms of fear. A person jerks, makes sharp, uncontrolled, and sometimes aggressive movements, or tries to escape: *puts his hand to his mouth in fear, gripping the armrests in fear, frightened, wildly hits him from behind*. Asthenic manifestations consist in a state of immobility, trembling, gasping, or uncontrolled physiological reactions: *shivers from cold and fear, his fear obvious now, his breathing quick and shallow*.

Example (2) illustrates the use of non-verbal components to construct the boy's fear in the horror film *Case 39*. He is terrified because of the possibility of meeting a demon who is in the body of an innocent girl. Asthenic manifestations of his fear are constructed by uncontrolled body movements: he is breathing rapidly, almost suffocating, unable to control the shaking of his body.

> *(2)EMILY What's the matter? What's scaring you?*
> *He looks at Emily**, terrified, starts hyperventilating.***
> *EMILY Oh God...*
> *Emily tries to calm **the panicked boy** as he **gasps for air, a horrible wheezing sound in his throat.*** (Wright, 2006)

However, not only nonverbal elements, but also the components of verbal and cinematic semiotic resources are able to embody fear in film. Language comprehension implies a mental simulation (Zwaan, 2004, p. 35), which, enacted by words, is sensitive to the characteristics of the objects mentioned (Scorolli & Borghi, 2008, p. 7). Scorolli and Borghi (Scorolli & Borghi, 2008) argue that sensorimotor processes underlie concepts. This involves reproducing the same neural activation pattern that occurs when individuals perceive non-linguistic reality referenced by the linguistic sign. In addition, word-induced simulation is influenced by such factors as the shape and orientation in space of the mentioned objects and the part of the body that acts in response to the stimulus.

The verbal semiotic resource is represented in characters' speech and it comprises lexical and syntactic means specific for constructing fear in horror films. Lexical means include interjections, descriptive words, and emotion-laden words.

Interjections express fear emphasizing the emotion and indicating the strong emotional state of the speaker. Structurally, they are either simple: *Oh*, *Uhh*, *Ach*, *Ooh*, *Omigod*, *Goodness*, *Jesus* or complex: *My God*, *Jesus Christ*, *Oh my God*, *Oh gee*. Their use is stimulus-bound as they implement a stereotyped appeal to higher powers, which is associated with the experience of danger as in example (3). Emily is aware of the mortal danger for the girl and expresses her terror with the interjection.

(3) Emily's face darkens.
EMILY (under her breath) Oh God...
ROBIN What's the matter?
Emily stares at the unsuspecting family. Lucy's next victims. She fends off a wave of emotion as the full horror of her predicament hits her (Wright, 2006).

Descriptive words *scared*, *afraid*, *shocked*, *terrified, etc.,* are also used by characters in horror films, although not widely. This can be explained by the fact that in the situation of danger individuals 'select' words spontaneously, paying less attention to the description of their state.

A peculiar feature of the linguistic representation of fear is the employment of emotion-laden words and phrases with explicit or implicit negative meaning: *bastard*, *son of a bitch*, *monster*, *stupid*, *crazy*, *idiotic*, *selfish* as well as swears and vulgarisms. Hirsch (1985) claims that swearing in the situation of danger is a symbolic action aimed at invoking the individual's will to resist the feeling of fear.

Syntactic means implicitly realize fear, in this way performing the expressive function. Violation of the sentence structure, characteristic for horror films, implies the emotional state of high intensity associated with fright. Syntactic means are represented by incomplete elliptical, nominative, and parceled sentences as well as by changing the word order – inverted and parallel constructions, semantically irrelevant repetitions, and pauses of hesitation. Characteristic of fear in horror films are pleas for help, threats, imperatives, and promises to change the state of affairs in order to get rid of the danger that provokes fear.

Consider example (4), which illustrates the use of incomplete sentences and pleas for help in constructing fear. Susan is scared by the girl ghost, who tries to catch her. In panic, she manages to escape and meets a security guard.

(4) Susan stands in the doorway, animatedly talking to a young security guard sitting at a desk lined with video monitors. She's speaking rapidly, and shaking:
SUSAN **In the stairs... there was... something... a strange person...all the lights were going out...**
The Guard doesn't understand her – in her panic, Susan's mispronouncing her words, and she knows it. Susan takes a breath, frustrated and frightened.
SUSAN **Please. Help me.** (Susco, 2004)

Cinematic semiotic resource also possesses the potential of meaning-making and is able to contribute into emotive meaning-making. As Coëgnarts claims (2017, p.2), cinema is meaningful insofar it provides evidence of the embodied thought. Cinematic devices, according to Heimann et al. (2014, p. 2087), can affect sensory-motor areas of the human brain, which gives rise to the neural activation of perceptual states (Coëgnarts, 2017, p. 3). The cinematic semiotic resource has a significant variety of elements as fear in horror film is a key factor of meaning-making providing an impact on the audience. It includes camera shot size, camera angles, lighting, and sound techniques.

A close-up and a middle close-up implement the image of a person experiencing the emotion and, therefore, are mandatory in constructing fear in horror films. While a close-up is affective, emphasizing the facial expression, a middle close-up highlights body movements. The sequence of the close-up and the middle close-up makes it possible to trace the character's actions in the state of fear and intensify its construction.

The camera angle frames the character in fear, stresses the dynamics of the character's actions, determines various degrees of perception for the viewers, and builds suspense and tension. In horror films, various angle types are used: side, high, and low angles, over-the-shoulder shot, the Dutch angle, and the POV shot, etc. They highlight different aspects of fear, for instance, the over-the-shoulder shot enables viewers to observe the cause of fear and the Dutch angle indicates the state of uncertainty and anxiety. The wide use of high angles in *The Grudge* indicates the character's helplessness and weakness when meeting supernatural forces, while numerous POV shots in *Case 39* show fear from the character's perspective, immersing the audience into the narrative through the experience of fear.

The sound effects construct fear through non-diegetic music and noises. While diegesis refers to the imaginary world of the film, non-diegesis relates to the objective world of the viewers. In horror films, music is employed to build up tension and suspense when something is about to happen to a character. This possesses a significant meaning-making potential, corroborates the idea that horror film aims at eliciting viewers' emotions controlling what the viewers feel. Music evoking fear may be described as irregular in tempo, high or low in tone with a sharp increase,

non-linear, and disturbing with a preference for stringed instruments. For instance, in film *The Grudge,* Christopher Young creates tension using the slow technique and low tone while the irregular rhythm and dissonance emphasize the anxiety of on-screen events.

The light effects create the atmosphere of ominousness and anxiety in horror films. Characteristic for fear is the unusual arrangement of lighting: dim light, darkness, flashes, chiaroscuro, and flickering, which cast unnatural shadows. The use of darkness and chiaroscuro in *The Grudge* makes objects and features seem distorted and some parts of the facial structure are hidden or altered.

Example 5 (Fig. 1) demonstrates the use of cinematic components to construct fear in film – a close-up, a high angle, dim light, and ominous sharp non-diegetic music. Karen Davis was sent to take over the care of dementia-ridden Emma. At her house, Karen witnesses Emma's fright caused by a spirit descending from the ceiling.

Figure 1
Example 5. The Grudge (22:15)

Thus, verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic resources possess significant, albeit different, meaning-making potentials. However, fear cannot be constructed by the elements of one semiotic system. They have the ability to form different meaningful configurations, which are characterized by the synergistic integration of multisemiotic elements. This demonstrates the emergent character of emotive meaning-making since it emerges as a result of multisemiotic integration.

Multimodal Blends of Constructing Fear in Horror Films

The meaning-making potentials of various semiotic resources follow underlying regularities of the human mind as humans are able to blend their experiences. According to Turner (2016, p. 2), "A basic technique for constructing meaning across an extended mental network is to use as an input to that network some very compressed, congenial concept in order to provide familiar, compressed structure to the blend." The meaning of filmic fear may be viewed as a multimodal blend, which emerges as a result of conceptual blending. Blends represent a qualitatively new formation, a synthesis of structures belonging to different mental spaces.

In terms of conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003), verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources may be viewed as separate mental or input spaces

since the meaning of fear is processed differently in them (Krysanova & Shevchenko, 2022). These meanings are mixed with each other through cross-mapping, which contributes to the formation of a multimodal blend. This emergent mixed space has a novel meaning, although based on the meanings of input spaces. Due to the dynamics of film, the creation of mixed blended spaces is a continual process provoking the formation of situation-dependent emergent blends of emotive meaning. As Bateman and Schmidt (2012, p. 90) argue, the determining of the regularities of combining semiotic resources is a key issue of multimodal analysis, which explains how the meaning is constructed in film.

The empirical analysis demonstrates that fear in horror films is constructed by the elements of two (nonverbal and cinematic) or three semiotic resources, as fear is always implemented by bodily signs and the image is supplied by the cinematic elements. The use of verbal elements specifies the emotion of fear and clarifies the image. This enables us to claim about two-component and three-component patterns. The most common configurations of fear in horror films include: facial and gesture components + close-up/middle close-up, facial component + close-up and sound effects, and verbal component + voice and facial components + close-up, camera angle, and sound effects. The prevalent use of nonverbal elements demonstrates the inextricable connection of fear with physiological processes and the shared embodied experience of filmmakers and viewers.

However, the expressive effect is realized by the integral combination of various elements, which complement and intensify fear as in example (6), when Emily sees the demon in the girl's body and is scared to death by her threat. Emily runs away and shuts herself in the room. She hears the footsteps of the approaching demon and trembles in fear (Figures 2–3). Her body movements are uncontrollable; she clings to the wall, paralysed with fear. In a panic, she screams and begs to leave her alone. A close-up and a middle close-up make it possible to follow her chaotic gestures and contorted facial expressions, while the ominous non-diegetic music intensifies the emotion.

(6) *Relentless. Tormenting Emily. Until she can't take it anymore. And she screams as loud as she can, half cursing, half begging, the veins standing out in her neck –*
EMILY Leave me alone!!! (Wright, 2006)

Figure 2
Example 6. Case 39. (1.32.09)

Figure 3
Case 39. (1.32.15)
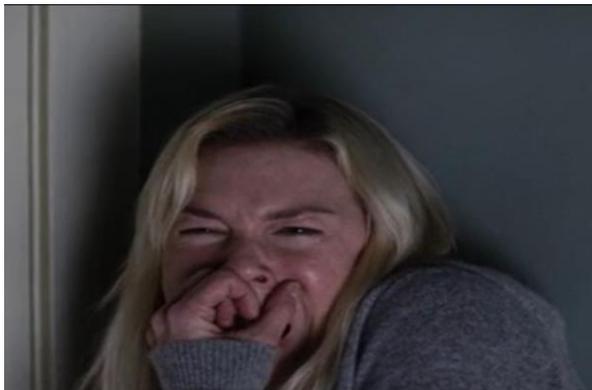
The blends of fear in horror films may be marked by the semiotic salience, when the elements belonging to one semiotic system prevail within the multimodal combination, which makes the non-parity pattern. The salient effect makes it possible for filmmakers to highlight different aspects of constructing fear. The elements of the verbal semiotic system prevail in case the characters try to justify the cause of fear or convince the opponent not to serve as a source of danger. Nonverbal elements emphasize the neurophysiological manifestations that embody the emotion on the screen while the prevalence of cinematic elements aims to influence the emotional sphere of the audience. In the example below, Matthew is scared to death by an encounter with a ghost. His mouth and eyes are wide open. The cinematic means, which prevail in this episode, enhance the emotion of fear. The close-up, the high angle, dim lighting, harsh diegetic sounds, and non-diegetic music complement and intensify the character's fear.

Figure 4
Example 7. The Grudge. (33:56)

In order to create shock and fear in audience, filmmakers resort to creating suspense, which increases the tension of scenes. To reach this effect, different semiotic elements may be sequentially organized, creating the consecutive pattern. The sequence of semiotic devices prolongs the time before the actual outcome of the fearful situation and keeps the audience in suspense. According to recent research in

psychophysiology (Bound, 2016), fear is at the heart of building suspense in horror films, acting as tonic or phasic emotion to scare the viewer.

The following example illustrates the use of the consecutive pattern. Walking through the hallway, Susan is frightened by a strange scraping sound (Fig. 5). She shivers and nervously looks round. Then, she looks up, noticing the top floor flickering. Cinematic devices employed to construct fear include the close-up, the high angle, flickering light, and a non-diegetic sound. Figures 5, 6 illustrate Susan's terror when she sees a ghost with a skinny pale hand. Susan's breath catches in her throat, her mouth and eyes are wide-open, she is motionless. The close-up and the low angle combined with ominous diegetic sounds of breaking glass and scraping intensify the emotion. Next, she screams and runs down to open the door. The whole episode is accompanied by diegetic sounds and sharp non-linear non-diegetic music.

Figure 5
Example 8. The Grudge (44:18)

Figure 6
The Grudge (44:39)

On the whole, fear in horror films is constructed by emergent multimodal blends which follow two-/three-component, non-parity, and consecutive patterns of their combination. The ability of semiotic components to form a multiplicity of combinations indicates their meaning-making potential in film and enables us to view fear as an emergent construct.

As horror films always seek to elicit the viewers' emotional response, it is necessary to follow the peculiarities of the audience's reconstruction of the emotion of fear.

Reconstructing Fear in Horror Film: A Viewers' Perspective

Emotive meaning-making in film is the interactive process of filmmakers-viewers communication. Horror films are always directed and oriented to the addressee as they aim to cause fear or disgust in their audience. Multisemiotic elements in horror films, verbal or nonverbal, are used to provoke psychological reactions in the audience. Smith (2003, p. 8) claims, that viewers perceive film events as real as they subconsciously identify themselves with film characters. If events are perceived as real they are able to evoke emotions (Barret, 2017). The effect of reality is created by the camera through the audiovisual representations of the world. "By restaging the process of our earliest identifications with images (the Lacanian mirror stage), film asks us temporarily to reconstitute our identities by taking up the pleasurable, cohesive, all-seeing position offered to us by the film" (Smith, 2003, p. 177).

Therefore, the next stage of this study aims to determine the reconstruction of fear in horror films by the audience. To achieve this goal, I conducted an experiment, which included six questions shown in the table below, alongside with the responses received (see Table 1).

Table 1
Survey Questions and Responses

Q1 What emotion is constructed by film characters in the suggested film excerpts?	
Males	Females
fear 45%	fear 36%
horror 32%	horror 47%
fright 20%	fright 15%
anxiety 3%	anxiety 2%
Q2 How do you perceive fear constructed on the screen: as a whole entity, through verbal elements, non-verbal elements, or cinematic elements?	
Males	Females
a whole entity 81%	a whole entity 78%
verbal elements 1%	verbal elements 3%
non-verbal elements 10%	non-verbal elements 8%
cinematic elements 8%	cinematic elements 11%
Q3 What verbal elements indicate fear for you in horror films?	
Males	Females
interjections 34%	interjections 19%
pleas for help 36%	pleas for help 34 %
imperatives 7%	imperatives 18%
descriptive words 15%	descriptive words 8%
violation of sentence structure 8%	violation of sentence structure 21%

Q4 What nonverbal elements indicate fear for you in horror films?	
Males	Females
facial expressions 48%	facial expressions 36%
voice (scream) 39%	voice (scream) 48%
chaotic/aggressive gestures 13%	chaotic/aggressive gestures 16%

Q5 What cinematic elements indicate fear for you in horror films?	
Males	Females
sound (music) 50%	sound (music) 45%
dim/flickering light 14%	dim/flickering light 19% c
close-up 34%	lose-up 32%
angle 2%	angle 4%

Q6 What emotion do you feel while watching the horror film?	
Males	Females
fear 39%	fear 50%
interest 45%	interest 20%
disgust 16%	disgust 18%
	tension 12%

The analysis of responses demonstrates that fear in horror films is reconstructed by viewers with a different level of intensity: as anxiety, fear, fright, or horror, which proves the clustering character of this emotion. Male and female respondents perceive on-screen fear as a whole entity in almost the same ratio: 81% of males and 78% of females. However, 11% of female respondents reconstruct fear based on cinematic elements, while non-verbal components are decisive in reconstructing fear for 10% of male respondents.

As for the role of multisemiotic elements in reconstructing fear, they differ in a certain way between males and females. Among verbal means, the main indicators of fear are pleas for help for males and females (36% and 34%, respectively). Besides, lexical means are more decisive for male respondents, including interjections (34%) and descriptive words (15%) while violation of the sentence structure (21%) is a more prominent indicator for females in the reconstruction of fear.

For both male and female respondents, the voice and facial expressions are decisive for the reconstruction of fear, with the predominance of the facial expressions (48%) among males and the voice (48%) among females. Survey results for cinematic means are fairly similar for males and females. Music and close-up play a crucial role in reconstructing fear in horror films.

Although all respondents reconstruct the emotion of fear according to the intention of the filmmakers, they experience different emotions when watching horror films. Males feel more interested in the on-screen events, experiencing fear and disgust less intensely. At the same time, females experience negative emotions more: fear, disgust, and tension dominate, while interest is not so common.

The results of the survey demonstrate that viewers are able to reconstruct the emotion of fear intended by filmmakers. The joint emotion is based on the filmmakers' and viewers' joint attention which makes their co-participation in emotive meaning-making possible.

Conclusions

This article has brought together psycholinguistic and cognitive-semiotic approaches to constructing fear in horror films. Unlike other researches, this study examines the construction of fear from both the filmmakers' and the viewers' perspectives taking into account the multimodal nature of horror films.

Firstly, the meaning of fear in horror films is created by the synergistic combination of audial and visual modes as well as verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic elements. While the verbal and non-verbal aspects of filmic fear are embedded in its social and cultural manifestations, cinematic technical devices indirectly appeal to fear as a threat to a human life or well-being highlighting the peculiar aspects of this emotion. Typical verbal elements include interjections, descriptive or emotion-laden words, pleas for help, imperatives, and the violation of the sentence structure. Nonverbal elements are characterized by contorted facial expressions, screaming, trembling, chaotic gestures, or stupor. Cinematic elements contain a close-up and a middle close-up, various camera angle types, non-linear and disturbing music with a preference for stringed instruments, and dim light. All components of semiotic resources possess the meaning-making potential highlighting various aspects of fear in horror films.

Secondly, fear emerges as a multimodal construct, the result of conceptual integration, which stipulates the allocation of multimodal blends characteristic of fear in horror films: two-/three-component, non-parity, and consecutive patterns. Blends represent a synthesis of elements belonging to different semiotic resources and can be viewed as a semantic entity. The typical blends of constructing fear in horror films include facial and gesture components + close-up/middle close-up, facial component + close-up and sound effects, and verbal component + voice and facial components + close-up, camera angle, and sound effects. It follows that non-verbal and cinematic elements are a constant part in the construction of fear, while the use of verbal ones can vary depending on the communicative situation. This demonstrates a tendency towards the multi-component construction of fear, which, in turn, indicates that fear cannot be constructed by the elements of a single semiotic system.

Thirdly, filmmakers and viewers are viewed as co-participants in constructing fear. Filmmakers' intention is directed to influence the film recipients and it entails viewers' affective and perceptual participation in on-screen events. Emotive meaning-making is viewed as the process of intersubjective interaction between filmmakers and viewers constituted by multimodal semiotic resources and resulting in ascribing emotive meaning to linguistic and non-linguistic signs. It is rooted in

bodily experiences and embodied not only through nonverbal elements, but also verbal and cinematic ones. The main indicators of fear for both male and female viewers are pleas for help, the voice and facial expressions, and music and close-up. The results of the experiment demonstrate that viewers are able to share the joint intention with the filmmakers and reconstruct fear, which is perceived as a whole entity with a different level of intensity: from anxiety to horror.

The use of the integrative psycholinguistic and cognitive-semiotic framework makes it possible to explain multimodal construction of fear in horror films from the filmmakers' and viewers' perspectives. This stipulates the further study of emotive meaning-making in various types of multimodal discourses: political and social commercials, educational videos, 'reels' in social network, etc., with regard to the heterogeneous means used to create this content.

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Appendix

Film title	Number of episodes
Case 39	41
Drag Me to Hell	11
Hellbound: Hellraiser II	20
Hellraiser: Deader	10
It	16
Jennifer's Body	12
Land of the Dead	5
Legion	18
Mirrors	21
Orphan	19
Suspect Zero	4
The Amityville Asylum	5
The Grudge	21
The Hills Have Eyes	19
The Roommate	7
Timber Falls	10
Twilight: New Moon	11
Total	250