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RESEARCH PAPER

Emotion across Modes in Bol: A Multimodal SFL Analysis of English Subtitles

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with an analysis of both text and images of the BOL movie (2011) by applying a multimodal discourse analysis approach proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory (2006), as well as a systemic functional linguistic analysis approach, drawing from the theory of Halliday & Matthiessen (2014). The core objective of this study is to explore how text and images are integrated to convey interactional meanings within movies and to investigate how these elements together highlight the interpersonal meaning conveyed through textual content. The entire movie on YouTube was watched, and then screenshots of powerful, emotive scenes, along with their subtitles, were captured as data. The analysis examines five powerful emotive scenes to explore how emotions are constructed across visual and verbal modes in the Pakistani movie Bol (2011). These scenes are emotionally intense, showing the themes of domestic violence, patriarchy, gender differences, and female resistance. Each scene is analyzed based on its mood structures, visual features (gaze, angle, distance, modality, and participants), and interplay between text and images. The findings of this study unveil that the Bol movie not only conveys emotions through verbal language but also camera angles, directions, silence, and gaze. In conclusion, verbal and non-verbal language in this movie enhances the emotional intensity of the movie.

| **KEYWORDS** | Multimodal Analysis, Silence, Bol, Interplay, Visual, Non-Verbal, Emotive |

Introduction

As a source of cultural storytelling, Cinemas play an important role in reflecting and shaping human emotions, identities, and ideologies. Cinemas are a source to construct layered meanings by blending spoken, visual, non-verbal, and spatial features of a language. This introduction provides the background of the study, states the research questions and objectives, and the significance of the study. The expression and reflection of emotions serve as a central communicative function in Cinema. Emotive language and expression of intense emotive experiences in movies not only serve as a guide for the audience but also act as a mechanism for challenging and highlighting social structures such as gender, identity, power, and morality.

Text and images are fundamentals in the art of filmmaking because they collectively serve to shape the audience's understanding of the narrative. Text is considered a linguistic and semiotic unit that deals with both oral and written language. Text has two dimensions, one is documentary and the other is literary, which extends beyond a document to reflect and complement the existing reality. In South Asian contexts, storytelling through cinema is mainly based on emotional narratives. The movie Bol (2011), directed by Mansoor, explores certain controversial themes such as silence, women's resistance, patriarchal violence, reproductive rights, and gender identity. All these themes are not only displayed through

verbal language but also through visual elements like gaze, angle, direction, sound, and participants.

This study investigates how the visual and verbal elements in the film *Bol* (2011) help in constructing emotional meaning. It explores the relationship between images and text, examining how they influence one another to produce emotionally charged and ideologically significant moments. Specifically, the research highlights how text and visual modes collectively convey emotional intensity. The objectives of the study are threefold: to explore how images and text in *Bol* interact to construct meaning, to analyze how visual and verbal modes co-function to express emotional depth, and to assess the effectiveness of visual features such as gaze, angle, modality, and distance in representing emotional states throughout the film. This study has analysed only five emotive scenes from the movie Bol (2011) using a multimodal framework combining SFL analysis and visual Grammar. Hence, this study does not cover Bol (2011) as a whole. The visual data in this study comprises still images, which limit the movement and sound elements in this movie. The verbal analysis of the scenes from this movie is based on English subtitles, which do not cover Urdu as a whole. Lastly, this movie is directed in specific contexts, which means that its findings are not generalizable to broader contexts and cultures.

This study recommends that the MDA and SFL frameworks should be applied to a wider range of non-Western films to explore ideologies and culturally specific emotions. Furthermore, these frameworks can also be applied to explore dynamic audiovisual features such as sound, movement, and silence to deepen understanding of affect in film. In educational situations, these frameworks can be used to support the development of multimodal and visual literacy.

Literature Review

The interdisciplinary frameworks, including semiotics, linguistics, and visual studies, have become significant in the study of emotions. For this purpose, systemic functional linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis provide a way to explore the connection and interaction between verbal, non-verbal, and visual elements of a film. The present study, based on the analysis of the socio-political film Bol (2011) by Shoaib Mansoor, aims to explore how emotions are constructed and conveyed through verbal and visual modes together.

Emotions and Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic functional linguistics highlights that a language involves three meta-functions: ideational, textual, and interpersonal. Among all of these meta-functions, interpersonal meta-function is the one closely related to emotional discourse as it deals with mood and modality. Within this interpersonal meta-function, Appraisal Theory provides a way to refine the interpersonal elements of language by dealing with aesthetics, ethics, and emotions. Many studies employed Appraisal theory to explore emotional patterns in political speeches.

Multimodal discourse analysis in film

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) provides an extended lens to include image, sound, layout, gesture, and other non-verbal modes. Visual Grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduces a systematic way to analyze visual elements of communication like gaze, angle, distance, modality, and participants, which are parallel to the meta-functions of SFL. In cinematic art, MDA has become significant in analyzing how meaning is constructed and analyzed through the convergence of verbal and non-verbal elements (O'Halloran, 2004; Baldry & Thibault, 2006). Another scholar, Jewitt (2009), says that

meaning in the film arises from "semiotic orchestration", in which different modes integrate to produce affective impact and to reflect ideologies.

Julianingsi (2023) analyzed the Cinderella (2021) film by employing a multimodal approach. Her study integrated Halliday's Interpersonal Meta-function along with Kress and Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar. Her study explored how emotions like hate, love, frustration, hope, and aspiration were expressed by integrating spoken and visual features of language. This researcher's study argues that the interplay of text and images significantly shaped the interpersonal meanings of language in the Cinderella movie.

Li and Hassan (2021) conducted a multimodal analysis of the Little Big Soldier movie's poster. Both researchers applied MDA to find out how interpersonal, textual, and ideational meanings are constructed and expressed together. The study mainly focused on visual elements like gaze, angle, color, participants, and font size. The findings of this study showed a complex emotional narrative by drawing visual contrast between the general's firm expressions and the Soldiers' relaxed and calm attitude, combined with specific angles and specific gaze. These findings highlight the effectiveness of MDA in exploring how perspective and affect are visually encoded.

Many scholars applied SFL to different genres such as political, literary, and educational contexts. In the same way, many have applied MDA to digital media and visual arts, but the point is that only a few of them have employed these frameworks in cinematic art and texts. Research on how emotions are constructed and expressed over time through the lens of MDA and SFL is very rare. In this regard, this study aims to highlight the gap by employing multimodal SFL analysis on the Bol (2011) movie to explore how emotions are conveyed and expressed through the convergence of SFL and MDA (visual lens). This study highlights that emotions in a film are not incidental but are systematically generated and crafted through visual elements such as angle, gaze, direction, light, etc. This study also contributes to expanding the scope of applying MDA and SFL to emotionally intense movies or films.

Materials and Methods

This study deals with a qualitative multimodal discourse analysis approach along with the SFL approach to examine the emotional intensity of the Bol (2011) movie through verbal and visual modes of language. For this purpose, five emotionally intense scenes are selected, each of which is captured as a screenshot with English subtitles via YouTube. The analysis of clause-level construction of emotions is based on Halliday's SFL framework, and the analysis of visual elements of this movie to portray emotions is based on Kress & Van Leeuwen's visual grammar. Each selected scene is analyzed through both verbal and visual modes of language. The analysis shows how emotions are displayed in the Bol (2011) movie through text, verbal, and visual modes, and the interplay of texts and images. The sampling rationale of this study is based on the fact that these five selected scenes are peak emotional scenes of this movie, acting as representatives of the whole movie. Analyzing the movie in its entirety would dilute the focus, so only five emotionally intense scenes were selected from the whole movie.

Results and discussion

DATUM 1
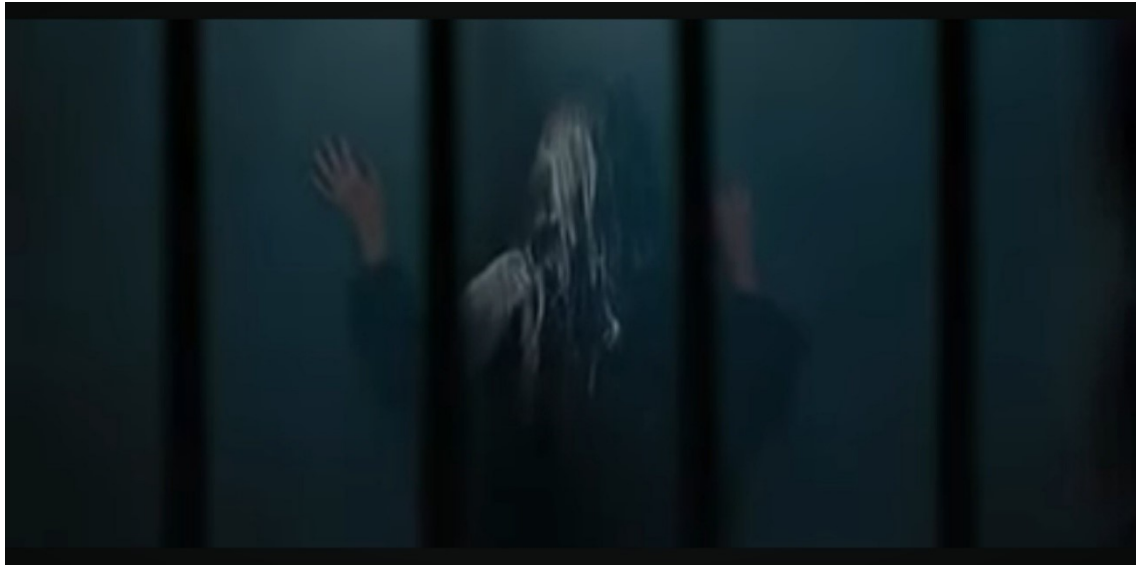
This is the scene captured in prison just before Zainab's execution speech. The absence of text here is significant in semiotics. Here silence has become a whole mode of language. It highlights emotional intensity and requires the readers to extract meaning through visual and symbolic elements.

Interactive Meaning of Image (Visual Grammar)

(applying Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)

Table 1
DATUM

Feature	Description
Participants	Zainab is the sole participant in this scene. Her back is facing the camera while her face is towards the wall, and her hands are touching the wall. This conveys her surrender, loneliness, and resignation.
Distance	The shot is Medium-long, showing Zainab from the back, and her hands are raised, touching the wall. This distance shows a harmony between intimacy and emotional detachment, displaying her isolated self in prison.
Angle	Eye-level angle but horizontal. This camera angle allows readers to relate to her emotionally, not to pity her.
Gaze	An inward gaze is visible here. Zainab is not looking at the audience as she is facing the wall. But her inward gaze symbolizes resignation, reflection, and withdrawal from the world. The audience behaves as a silent observer of her trauma.
Modality	Low in modality because the light is dim and shadowy. This image shows dark blue and gray color tones, which symbolize solitude, despair, death, and emotional coldness. This modality description highlights her inner turmoil and impending death.

Interplay Between Image and Text (Silence)

There is no textual clause or subtitle, so the silence here functions as a meaning-making source for the audience. The silence here is saying more than Zainab's **posture**, framing, and physical isolation**,** and all these collectively create a powerful interplay between the visual mode and the emotional narrative.

The vertical bars in this image are the prison bars, which symbolize social confinement. Zainab's imprisonment symbolizes systemic violence. Her hands raised, touching the wall, showing her surrender and embrace of fate. Her body language, stillness, and darkness in this image symbolize silence. The absence of verbal expressions and text in this scene is semiotically significant. As there is no spoken text in this image the interplay

between silence and image highlights female oppression, the embrace of fate, and emotional trauma.

DATUM 2

Saifi, my heart was saying, I should see how I look. How does it feel?

Saifi is half-seated, wearing makeup and a feminine shawl. He is crying and visibly distressed, looking slightly upward towards his sister off-frame.

Clause-Level SFL Analysis

Table 2
DATUM 2

Clause Segment	Function
My heart	Subject
was saying	Finite + Predicator
I	Subject (embedded clause)
should see	Finite + Predicator
How I look	Complement (embedded clause)
How does it feel?	Interrogative Mood (separate)

This text in the form of subtitles includes two clauses

Declarative clause: "My heart was saying I should see how I look."

It is a nested clause that consists of an embedded mood-residue structure. Here, the speakers' internal motivation is visible, having modality ("should") to soften the intention.

Interrogative clause: "How does it feel?"

This is a question uttered by Saifi, which means to experience the charm of wearing makeup and a feminine dupatta, indicating vulnerability, and his request for approval from the listener. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), the blend of these declarative and interrogative clauses reflects both justification and pleading.

Interactive Meanings of Image (Visual Grammar)

Table 3
DATUM 3

Feature	Description
Participants	Saifi is the participant represented here. His facial expression) shows his emotional state and self-expression. In this frame, his sister's hand is also present, which shows interaction, but the emotional focus is on Saifi.

Distance	Close-up. The image's focus is on Saifi's head and upper body. This emotional state shows the character's vulnerability.
Angle	Horizontal Eye-level angle. This angle enhances the element of sympathy in the audience rather than pity.
Gaze	Gaze is present. Saifi's face is towards someone off-screen (her sister), not at the audience. This allows viewers to observe instead of engage. It reflects authenticity and an element of realism.
Modality	High modality. Bright lighting and vibrant clothing colors (turquoise, red lipstick, purple bedding) create a realistic and expressive scene. The emotional content is not abstract but visually intense and direct.

Interplay Between Text and Image

The line subtitle, *"My heart was saying, I should see how I look..."* is uttered by Saifi having a teary expression on his face with makeup, symbolizing the expressions of pleading. These expressions highlight the themes of gender identity, emotional vulnerability, and the urge for self-expression.

- The verbal element of this scene indicates internal desire, self-expression, and self-justification.

- The visual mode highlights the emotional depth on Saifi's face, having elements of fear, shame, and sadness.

- The gaze, close-up, and modality engage the audience to experience Saifi's emotional state and pain indirectly, adding to the theme of sympathy. Viewers here function as observers but not as active participants.

This interplay of verbal and visual modes not only expresses personal identity conflict but also presents a critique of social norms that suppress it. Both declarative and interrogative clauses here symbolize silent suffering and inner turmoil. The interplay of verbal and visual modes enhances the emotional narrative of this movie.

DATUM 3

A close-up of Saifi's face suffocating under a plastic bag. His open mouth is gasping for breath, eyes wide open with terror. His father's hand is on his neck.

The absence of language highlights semiotic silence because Saifi is unable to speak, showing him as helpless and fearful. This silence functions as a powerful mode here.

Interactive Meanings of Image (Visual Grammar)

(applying Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)

Table 4
DATUM

Feature	Description
Participants	Saifi is a central character. His face is suffocated by the plastic sheet, symbolizing social erasure and helplessness. The hand of his father is making Saifi suffocate, symbolizing power imbalance and violence.
Distance	Full close-up. The tightly framed face of Saifi is visible in this image. This highlights the intensity of trauma.
Angle	The angle from above is slightly down on Saifi. This angle shows the themes of oppression, terror, and injustice.
Gaze	Offers gaze, Saifi's gaze is not at the viewers but is in an upward direction towards the face of his father (the attacker). Here, the indirect gaze makes the viewer a silent observer of Saifi's victimization.
Modality	High in modality. This image shows the plastic texture, skin tone, and Saifi's expressions, which add to the theme of realism. The dim, harsh lighting adds to the urgency and atrocity of the scene. Dim light, pale skin, and plastic texture add to the rawness and purity of the moment.

Interplay Between Image and Silence

There is a contrast between the image and the absence of verbal mode in this scene. This silence is not neutral — it reflects the violence of silencing. Saifi's mouth is open, but no words are allowed; his identity is literally and symbolically being suffocated.

- The close-up shows the suffering.

- The plastic sheet hides his features, showing how society refuses to "see" him.

- The lack of sound or subtitles allows viewers to observe violence without distraction.

- The hand of the father shows not just one father, but a whole system of patriarchal power that punishes gender non-conformity.

As there is no spoken text in this scene, visual elements like extreme close-up framing, offer gaze, high angle, and realistic modality collectively generate a powerful representation of gendered violence and oppression. The silence is meaningful here, along with the image, to show the forced erasure of the identity of Saifi. The interplay between the image and the absence of text highlights the brutality of the patriarchal system.

DATUM 4

deceived so much. You kept me in the house as a prisoner and you yourself were with Dindar. I kept blowing the dust. Keep doing

The father is represented as aggressive and is captured mid-action while slapping his wife. The mother jerks away with partially shut eyes. The room's light is dim and emotionally tense.

(Clause-Level SFL)

Table 5
DATUM

Clause Element	Function
You	Subject
kept	Finite + Predicator
me	Complement (object)
In the house as a prisoner	Circumstantial Adjunct
And you yourself were with Dindar.	Coordinated Clause

This sentence has two coordinated declarative clauses:

Clause 1: "You kept me in the house as a prisoner."

- o   Declarative mood symbolizing accusation.

- o   Subject ("you") + Finite ("kept") + object as Complement ("me")

- o   The Adjunct "in the house as a prisoner" conveys circumstantial confinement (mental and physical).

Clause 2: "You yourself were with Dindar"

- o   Emphasizing accusation using "yourself"

This clause structure constructs a powerful interpersonal meaning; the speaker (father) is shifting blame and expressing male anger, immersed in patriarchal logic.

Interactive Meanings of Image (Visual Grammar)

Table 5
DATUM

Feature	Description
Participants	Two participants in interaction: the father (aggressor) and the mother (victim). The father is actively slapping while the mother is passive and flinching away from his face, which highlights the power dynamic and violence.
Distance	A medium shot captures both bodies from the waist-up view, expressing the action and the emotional reaction. This symbolizes the theme of abuse.
Angle	Eye-level angle, presents a neutral observer's viewpoint, demanding viewer empathy and awareness, allowing viewers to make judgments against the aggressor.
Gaze	Offer gaze, no character is looking at the viewers; instead audience has to witness the domestic silence.
Modality	High modality with natural lighting and realistic colors. These elements symbolize the theme of emotional confrontation.

**Interplay Between Text and Image**

The subtitle accuses the wife of betrayal while the image shows the father physically attacking her.

- The rhetoric of betrayal in this text shows male anger.

- The image contradicts it by showing aggression and abuse.

- This multimodal contrast reveals the underlying power structure: men justify violence through emotional manipulation and social norms.

The interplay of verbal and visual elements creates a critically ideological moment, which shows the man's authority over the woman in this scene. The declarative mood of the clauses in this subtitle allows readers to develop a sense of sympathy for the women in oppression. It also criticizes the patriarchal norms and power dynamics.

DATUM 5

not give birth? Think why is giving birth not a crime?
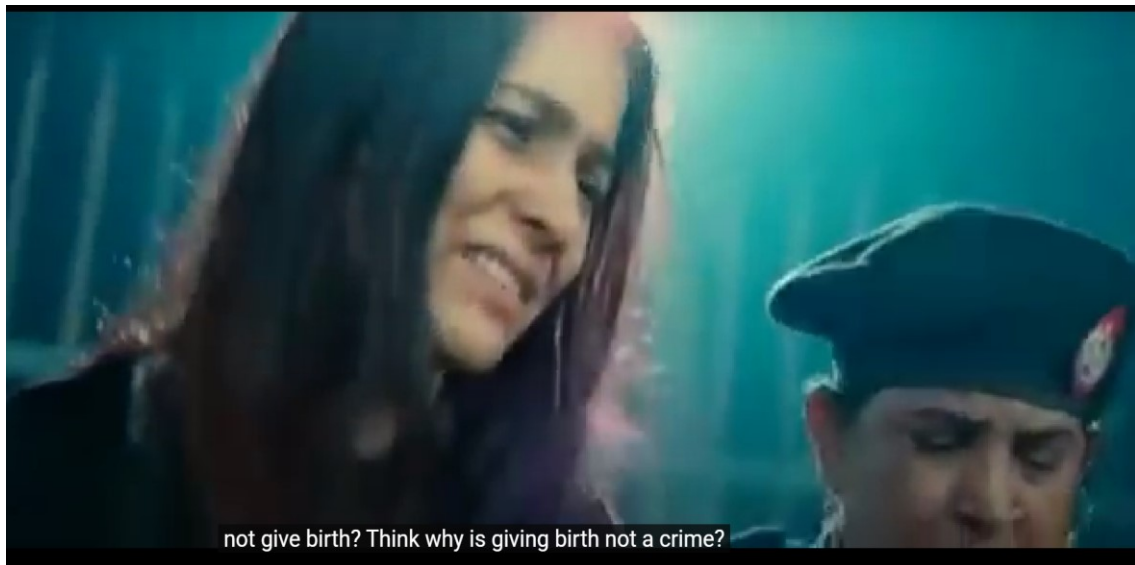
Description*:* Handcuffed Zainab, flanked by officers, is visible in this scene, who is speaking out of pain with a shaky voice. A Police officer beside her looks down, showing tension.

Syntactic Analysis of Subtitle (Clause-Level SFL)

"Think why is giving birth not a crime?"

Table 6
DATUM

Clause Segment	Function
Think	Imperative (Mood: command)
Why is giving birth not a crime	Embedded interrogative clause
giving birth	Subject
Is	Finite
Not a crime	Complement

This is a complex imperative sentence containing a rhetorically embedded interrogative.

- The speaker's utterance, "Think…" symbolizes command.

- The interrogative clause ("Why is giving birth not a crime?") is a tag question that requires not to get an answer but to confront ideology.

- It allows the audience to think about gender injustice, specifically, how women are punished for reproduction.

Based on Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), this utterance is rich in interpersonal meta-function because Zainab asserts power not only verbally but also through physical modes.

Interactive Meanings of Image (Visual Grammar)

Table 6
DATUM

Feature	Description
Participants	Zainab is the represented participant and the focus. Her expression is stressful, she's in mid-speech, and her posture shows a tense condition.
Distance	medium close-up, focusing on Zainab's face and upper body. This shot allows viewers to observe her pain and passion closely.
Angle	Eye-level horizontal angle, making the audience and Zainab at the same mark. She challenges not just the participants of the movie, but also the viewers.
Gaze	Indirect gaze (offer gaze). Zainab looks slightly past the camera, towards people in the scene. This enhances the reflective mode of viewers, rather than a confrontation.
Modality	High modality. Realistic shadows and lighting give Zainab an aura of dignity and spiritual elevation. Her emotions are visible as visually raw and authentic.

Interplay Between Text and Image

In this scene, the spoken text challenges patriarchal norms and questions why giving birth is not a crime, symbolizing blame and punishment. Zainab's tight facial expressions and tired voice show how hollow she is on the inside, but strong on the outside.

- The imperative "Think…" puts her in intellectual authority, even while in handcuffs.

- Her non-gaze and painful smile portray both resistance and emotional exhaustion.

The interplay of verbal and visual elements here presents Zainab as a tragic feminist hero who is silenced by law but elevated by truth. Syntactically, the clause in the subtitle is an imperative embedded with a rhetorical question, reflecting Zainab's final act of resistance. All these elements are well-analyzed by applying multimodal and SFL frameworks on this scene, symbolizing patriarchy, women's injustice, and resistance.

Discussion

The findings of this discuss that the movie Bol (2011) holds a significant interplay of visual and verbal modes of language to enhance emotionally intense semiotics. Semiotic orchestration is the key characteristic of this movie, which is analyzed by employing MDA and SFL frameworks in five emotionally intense scenes of this movie. Each scene is distinct from the other in verbal and visual modes.

Collectively, all the findings from each datum are significant in their verbal and visual elements. Examination of emotions in this film reveals that emotions are not just performed by characters of this movie but are constructed through angle, gaze, and modality, and all these modes contribute to highlighting themes like gender identity, violence, repression, domestic abuse, power dynamics, resistance, and confrontation.

This study contributes to expanding the scope of SFL and MDA frameworks into cinematic art by offering a well-structured way to explore emotional meanings across modes. Furthermore, by focusing on a South Asian film, this study demonstrates how emotion functions as a space for ideological negotiation within non-Western cinema, thereby defending a greater representation of regional narratives in multimodal linguistic scholarship.

Conclusion

This study aims to investigate how emotions are made and communicated across verbal and visual modes in *Bol* (2011). By using a multimodal discourse analysis framework

grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and visual grammar. Through the detailed investigation and analysis of five emotionally rich scenes, the research shows that *Bol* delivers affect not only through spoken dialogue but through a careful mix of language structure, visual composition, silence, symbolic framing, and gesture. Subtitled clauses were found to contain strong interpersonal meaning, often structured through declarative or imperative moods and imbued with evaluative stances via Appraisal resources like Affect and Judgment. At the same time, visual elements such as close-up framing, indirect gaze, high or low modality, and horizontal or vertical angles contributed powerfully to the representation of grief, shame, resistance, and vulnerability.

The results show that emotions in *Bol* are not random but are used purposefully and also designed in a way that viewers attach ideologically to marginalized voices and critique significant structures of patriarchy, gender oppression, and silence. In scenes without dialogue, affect was conveyed through image alone, proving that emotional meaning in cinema often transcends linguistic boundaries. By the addition of clause-level SFL analysis and visual grammar, the study clearly shows how meaning is co-constructed across modes, providing a framework for investigating affective meaning in culture-enriched film narratives.

In summary, this research contributes in the sense of expanding the application of multimodal SFL in emotionally and ideologically focused cinematic texts, specifically in non-Western contexts such as South Asian films. It highlights the importance of analyzing emotion not only as a thematic element but as a multilayered meaning-making resource that shapes how audiences take, feel, and respond to complex social issues. Future research could extend this approach to comparative studies across regional cinemas, including motion and sound design more deeply, or investigate how viewers' emotional responses as well by multimodal cues. *Bol,* therefore, stands as both a cinematic and semiotic site of resistance. Where language and image are combined to give voice to the silenced one.

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