

A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF “THE MARVELS” MOVIE POSTER

Herning Budiastono¹, Romel Noverino²
Gunadarma University, Salemba, Indonesia^{1,2}

hbudiastono@gmail.com, melnoverino@gmail.com

Received: 18/04/2024

Accepted: 22/04/2024

Publication: 22/04/2024

Abstract

Movie posters are not only used as a tool of artistic purposes, but also are essential elements within the extensive realm of film marketing, serving as visual representatives that are intended to charm and attract potential viewers. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how linguistic and multimodal elements intersect in the analysis of movie posters used in as a film promotion tool. This study uses Kress and van Leeuwen multimodal discourse analysis theory to discuss the findings carried out on The Marvels movie poster, which aim to reveal how verbal and visual signs work together as social sign to interpret the representational, interactional, and compositional meanings. The research uses Teun A. van Dijk multimodal dimension, which includes analyse a thorough review of visual components, design decisions, and symbolic depictions to understand their intended effect on prospective audiences. Moreover, this investigation unveiled the subtle ways in which societal, cultural, and cognitive factors impact interpretation. Delving into the social cognitive dimension within these posters provides insights into how audience reception is shaped by cultural contexts and cognitive mechanisms. The study stands as a testament to the interdisciplinary nature of research in linguistics and semiotics within the realm of visual communication.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Film, Multimodal, Movie Poster, Signs, Social

Introduction

A movie poster is more than just a promotional tool; it is a visual gateway into the cinematic world, a carefully crafted amalgamation of imagery and text designed to captivate and entice potential audiences. Serving as a crucial component of film marketing, a movie poster encapsulates the essence of a film, providing a snapshot of its narrative, characters, and thematic elements. Beyond its practical purpose of attracting viewers, a movie poster is a unique form of artistic expression, blending graphic design, photography, and typography to create a compelling visual narrative. In this vibrant intersection of art and commerce, movie posters wield the power to set the tone for a film, influencing public perception and generating anticipation. From the choice of colours and composition to the selection of taglines and placement of actors' images, every element is a deliberate decision aimed at communicating the film's identity and drawing the audience into the cinematic experience. As cultural artefacts, movie posters also reflect the zeitgeist of their time, mirroring societal trends, visual styles, and storytelling conventions.

Yin & Hassan (2021) conducted a movie poster multimodal discourse analysis on *Little Big Soldiers* movie poster. The research uses Kress and van Leeuwen multimodal discourse analysis theory to discuss the findings carried out on *Little Big Soldier* movie poster, which

aim to reveal how verbal and visual signs work together as social sign to interpret the representational, interactional, and compositional meanings.

Building upon a foundation of prior research, this study draws from systemic-functional linguistics, as evidenced by (Chen, 2014). The utilization of this linguistic framework indicates a deliberate choice to explore language in the context of broader social systems. Furthermore, the research aligns with the perspectives put forth by Kress and van Leeuwen, emphasizing a multimodal approach to analysing movie posters. This involves not only linguistic elements but also considers the visual and semiotic aspects of communication, recognizing the diverse modes through which meaning is conveyed in these promotional materials. By intertwining these theoretical frameworks, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how linguistic and multimodal elements intersect in the analysis of movie posters. This approach reflects a nuanced exploration of communication, acknowledging the intricate interplay between linguistic choices and visual components in shaping the overall impact of these promotional artefacts. Ultimately, the study stands as a testament to the interdisciplinary nature of research in linguistics and semiotics within the realm of visual communication.

Literature Review

The previous research conducted by (Nguyen, 2021) regarding multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) on the posters of fifteen highest-grossing American romantic comedy films highlights the notion that meaning construction extends beyond mere verbal expression to encompass a rich interplay of various semiotic resources, including images, sounds, and colours. Employing Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2020) framework, the research elucidates how these multimodal elements are employed to convey messages and advertise the featured movies. Through systematic examination, the study unveils both the convergences and divergences in the utilization of semiotic elements for meaning-making and promotional purposes within the context of movie poster design.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis as an approach applied to analyse written, spoken, or visual communication. It allows researchers to uncover the underlying cultural, political, and power dynamics that shape linguistic interactions.

According to Morgan (2010), discourse analysis is generally a comprehensive category that includes various methods for analysing communication models. Within this broad framework, a specific model of discourse can be discerned for more focused examination.

Johnstones (2017: 263) examines four fundamental themes which are essential for discourse analysis. Johnstones' observation expands on this suggesting that the interpretation of a text can originate from various sources, including the speaker's intention, the literal text itself, the audience's interpretation, or a combination of these elements. This multifaceted understanding highlights the intricate dynamics at play in discerning meaning within the realm of discourse analysis.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Gunther Kress and Van Leeuwen (1998) explained the framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), as the "Social Semiotics" paradigm, placed a strong emphasis on the significance of semiotics, on the study of signs and symbols, and on the examination of diverse communication modes. This paradigm highlights that signs and symbols play in conveying meaning across various modalities. Moreover, the meaning of communication acts can be constructed more comprehensively through a synthesis of different modes by MDA.

The framework promotes a holistic perspective that considers the interconnectedness of semiotic resources in shaping discourse. Thereby, it enriches our comprehension of the complex layers within multimodal communication. Overall, the integration of "Social Semiotics" into MDA

provides a robust analytical foundation for uncovering the intricate threads of meaning embedded in diverse communicative forms.

According to Van Leeuwen (2014), the utilization of multiple modes is considered essential for enhancing learning. These diverse forms of representation allow for the exploration of various facets and viewpoints that is related to the subjects being learned. Multimodal analysis has been employed in critically examining discourses in communication media (e.g., Bednarek and Caple 2012; Kress and van Leeuwen 1998; Knox 2007). The portrayal of ideas through staged photographs and a practice of long-established in advertising, are now observed by Machin and van Leeuwen. The observation has expanded into the editorial content of newspapers and magazines, where a faithful representation of reality is traditionally anticipated. These conceptual images are crafted to seamlessly integrate into multimodal designs that employ limited colour palettes, complement page layouts, and allow for textual accompaniment. Notably, these images are characterized by their generic nature, various decontextualizing techniques, and a restricted set of attributes to convey the identities of individuals and locations.

Teun A. Van Dijk (2011) presents three fundamental dimensions in the analysis of critical discourse within a multimodal context:

a) Textual Dimension

This dimension involves the analysis of linguistic elements, including the structure and content of written or spoken discourse. Van Dijk emphasizes the examination of how language contributes to the construction of social power, ideology, and representation. In multimodal analysis, this dimension extends beyond traditional text to encompass various modes of communication, such as images, symbols, and gestures.

b) Discursive Dimension

The discursive dimension focuses on broader patterns and structures in discourse, considering how language use is shaped by social structures, power relations, and cultural contexts. Van Dijk encourages scholars to explore the ways in which discourse reflects and reinforces social inequalities, ideologies, and norms. This dimension also extends to multimodal discourse, acknowledging the role of various modes in shaping discursive practices.

c) Social Cognitive Dimension

Van Dijk introduces the social cognitive dimension to highlight the cognitive processes involved in understanding and interpreting discourse. This dimension explores how individuals perceive, process, and respond to discourse in light of their social and cultural backgrounds. In a multimodal context, this dimension considers how cognitive processes are influenced by the interplay of linguistic and non-linguistic elements, such as images, colours, and spatial arrangements.

Research Method

This study conducted using qualitative analysis method. As stated by Colorafi and Evans (2016), qualitative analysis method is characterized by its descriptive nature, involving the analysis of data to generate insights. This method relies on examining and interpreting data, incorporating existing theories as foundational support, and ultimately yielding the development of new theories.

The data for this research used The Marvel Film movie poster, which is used their promotion material, which was published July 21, 2023 on their social media, to achieve specific criteria relevant to the research goals. The is data is chosen to fulfil a particular need or objective and is representative of the entire population. Instead of randomly selecting posters from a diverse array, this approach empowers researchers to carefully select a poster that match particular characteristics, genres, or themes of interest. For instance, in a study focused on the portrayal of women in cinema, researchers might purposefully choose posters featuring female protagonists or films addressing gender-related subjects. This deliberate selection gives researchers the opportunity to deeply investigate particular facets of movie poster design, messages, or cultural representations, offering a nuanced

comprehension. Consequently, movie poster analysis allows for a more customized exploration of visual and thematic elements within a targeted subset of posters.

In analysing movie poster, analysis procedure on this research used Teun A. van Dijk multimodal dimension, which included analyse a thorough review of visual components, design decisions, and symbolic depictions to understand their intended effect on prospective audiences. A key facet of this analysis involved considering colour theory, which the choice of particular colours was influential in eliciting emotions and establishing the film's overall atmosphere. For instance, vibrant colours such as red and orange can mean a sense of excitement or intensity, while cooler colours like blue and green indicate a more tranquil or enigmatic ambiance.

Moreover, the incorporation of typography and font styles in the poster add to its overall visual appeal and convey information regarding the movie's genre or mood.

The composition of a movie poster is another vital aspect of qualitative analysis. The arrangement of images, characters, and text elements within the poster can influence how viewers perceive the narrative and characters. A well-designed composition guides the viewer's eye, emphasizing key elements and creating a visually appealing layout.

Furthermore, the analysis of movie posters extends to cultural and social contexts. Elements such as the choice of imagery, representation of characters, and the overall visual language can be examined in relation to the target audience and cultural nuances. By understanding how specific images or symbols resonate with different demographics, filmmakers can tailor their promotional materials to better connect with diverse audiences. In essence, a qualitative analysis of movie posters provides valuable insights into the creative decisions made by filmmakers and their intentions in engaging and enticing viewers into the cinematic.

The reason in choosing The Marvel Film movie poster is because Comprehending the interplay of these elements unveils the planned influence on the audience, thereby enhancing the poster's overall efficacy in communicating the movie's theme and drawing in viewers. It allows for the evaluation of how effectively the poster adheres to the recognized visual style of the Marvel brand. Maintaining consistency in visual presentation not only aids in establishing brand recognition but also nurtures a rapport with the audience. Furthermore, it facilitates an examination of how the poster engages with cultural and social contexts. Assessing aspects such as character diversity, representation, and the incorporation of cultural symbols provides valuable insights into the movie's alignment with contemporary societal values.

This investigation utilized a methodology centred around descriptive analysis to delve into the research subject with increased detail and nuance. Through this analytical approach, the study endeavours to furnish a thorough and comprehensive explanation of the movie poster. The chosen method entails a careful scrutiny of the attributes, patterns, and contextual factors related to the movie poster, facilitating a more profound comprehension of the subject matter. By selecting a research design based on descriptive analysis, the objective is to surpass superficial insights and engage in a more profound examination of the intricacies intrinsic to the research topic.

Result and Discussion

This study used The Marvel 2023 movie poster, which published on social media July 21, 2023. The researcher analysed multimodal symbol contained in the poster based on its textual dimension, discursive dimension, and social cognitive dimension.



Figure 1 The Marvels Movie Poster

Textual Dimension

Textual dimension in multimodal discourse analysis refers to the analysis of language that used within a specific text or communication. In examining the textual dimension on a movie poster involved dissecting the written or verbal elements present. Textual components in a movie poster includes movie title, tagline or slogan, additional information, and main credit.



Figure 2 Movie Title

The poster includes movie title, which is The Marvels, represents not only the title of the movie but also the whole movie plot. The title tells the audience about the main protagonists of the movie. It has two unique symbols, the letter A and the letter S, which represent two other heroines.

HIGHER. FURTHER. FASTER. TOGETHER.

Figure 3 Movie Tagline

This poster does not present tagline with a sentence or short phrase, but with some words. This type of tagline encapsulates a central theme or crucial part of the movie's plot that generates curiosity and suggests the emotional progression or inner struggles depicted in the film.

A movie poster includes addition information which give audience another important detail about the movie. In this poster, the additional information displayed is a release date, which tells the audience to prepare themselves to watch the movie on the specific date, which November 10, 2023.

After producing the movie, not only in the movie, but also in the poster includes names of actors, producer, director, and other key elements who have contributed in producing the movie.

Discursive Dimension

This dimension involves understanding the language, narrative, and cultural representations which are used to shape meaning and influence the audience's perceptions.

Representation of Characters and Themes

The Marvels is a movie focuses on a heroine named Captain Marvel who travels across all planets to give protections. The movie title tells the audience that she is the main protagonist of the movie, but other than that detail, in movie she gets help from her others friends. The collaboration shows in the movie title which displays other heroines' symbol.

The "A" displays a symbol of other first heroine who joins her in the movie named Photon. And the "S" displays a symbol of the other second heroine named Ms. Marvel.

Power Dynamics and Emphasis

Actor credits on a movie poster usually emphasize the main or important actors engaging in the movie. These credits display the actors' names prominently which often written in bigger fonts or strategic placement to catch the eye. The arrangement and sequence of names may indicate the actors' significance or their roles in the film. This data acts as a crucial marketing tactic to appeal to viewers, particularly followers of these actors, and to give impact the audience's curiosity about the movie.

BRIE
LARSON TEYONAH
PARRIS IMAN
VELLANI SAMUEL L.
AND JACKSON

Figure 4Top Billing

This marketing strategy is called Top Billing. According to Oxford dictionary, "Billing" means "position", especially in the important one, that somebody is advertised or described as having in a show. While in the term of movie / theatre, Top Billing means someone has the principal characters in the film and has the most screen time.

"Top billing" in the context of movies refers to the prominent placement of an actor or other significant contributor's name in the credits or promotional materials. This positioning typically signifies their importance or star status within the film. This strategy helps to attracts viewers by featuring familiar or well-known names linked to the movie, shaping audience expectations and sparking interest in the film. The lead actors or those with significant roles usually receive Top Billing. However, the exact criteria for determining Top Billing can vary based on negotiations, contracts, or the perceived star power of an individual. In some cases, when there's a group of actors with similar significance or star status, they might share the spotlight on the billing. Sometimes, an actor's name stands alone. It is written down with "starring" or "with" credit to highlight their importance in the film.

MARVEL STUDIOS PRESENTS A KEVIN FEIGE PRODUCTION BRIE LARSON "THE MARVELS" TEYONAH PARRIS IMAN VELLANI ZAVIE ASHTON PARK SEB-JOON AND SAMUEL L. JACKSON
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID J. BARTIS AND KEVIN FEIGE PRODUCED BY ANDY PARK WRITTEN BY TARA DUMAS DIRECTED BY DAVID J. BARTIS
CASTING BY CATYON HESTERMAN COSTUME DESIGNER EVAN SCHEFF MUSIC BY LINDSEY PUGH EDITOR ANDY PARK EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID J. BARTIS AND KEVIN FEIGE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID J. BARTIS AND KEVIN FEIGE PRODUCED BY ANDY PARK WRITTEN BY TARA DUMAS DIRECTED BY DAVID J. BARTIS
CASTING BY CATYON HESTERMAN COSTUME DESIGNER EVAN SCHEFF MUSIC BY LINDSEY PUGH EDITOR ANDY PARK EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID J. BARTIS AND KEVIN FEIGE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID J. BARTIS AND KEVIN FEIGE PRODUCED BY ANDY PARK WRITTEN BY TARA DUMAS DIRECTED BY DAVID J. BARTIS
CASTING BY CATYON HESTERMAN COSTUME DESIGNER EVAN SCHEFF MUSIC BY LINDSEY PUGH EDITOR ANDY PARK EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID J. BARTIS AND KEVIN FEIGE

Figure 5Last Billing

This image represents the names credited with less, but still important roles in the movie production. The movie poster often lists significant contributors from the production team, covering roles like director, producer, screenwriter, and occasionally other essential crew. These acknowledgments highlight their input into the film's making and usually appear alongside the cast credits. The way these credits are displayed might differ in size and position, but they aim to acknowledge the pivotal behind-the-scenes work shaping the movie. Additionally, this information

can influence what audiences anticipate and draw attention from those interested in particular filmmakers or crew members.

This kind of credit is called “Last Billing”. “Last billing” in a movie refers to the positioning of a contributor's credit at the bottom of a movie poster or the conclusion of the credits sequence. This positioning doesn't always imply lack of importance. It signifies that their name appears after all other credited contributors. The order can change depending on contracts, the role's prominence, or the contributor's significance to the film.

This movie tagline is written in a form of four one-word sentence. This is a catchy style of tagline that succinctly communicates the essence or theme of a film. This is also expressing an aura of enigma and adventurous.

“Higher” means that these heroines are having an adventure in higher places, for instance an outer space, which requires them to use their abilities to fly, or at least ability leap to higher places. “Further” means they will have an adventure far from their home, to protect those in needs. “Faster” connects to their power as well, and the anomaly happens to them where they will forcefully to teleport to different places. “Together” means that they are able to have this adventure together, and to finish their mission and quest together as a team.

Social Cognitive Dimension

Social cognitive dimension involves grasping the connection between social influences and mental operations within the realm of communication or portrayal.

Psychological Impact and Emotional Response

a) Colour Palate

Red, the colour in the title, is a warm colour that is frequently employed to provoke excitement, energy, intensity, strength, power, determination as well as passion, desire, and love. Its highly visible nature is the reason why red is commonly used in stop signs, stoplights, and firefighting gear. It prompts rapid decision-making, making it an ideal choice for 'Buy Now' or 'Click Here' buttons on online banners and websites, (Cerrato, 2012, p. 4)

The red in the title is a dark red, which is associated with vigour, willpower, rage, anger, leadership, courage, longing, malice, and wrath.

Orange, the colour of the other heroine in the title on the letter S, represents playfulness, warmth, vibrant, joy, sunshine, tropics, enthusiasm, fascination, happiness, creativity, determination, attraction, success, encouragement, and stimulation, (Cerrato, 2012, p. 6). This colour is widely accepted by the younger generation. It embodies energy and enjoyment, representing risk-takers, extroverts, and those unrestrained. In the realm of colour psychology, it signifies adventure, positivity, confidence, and sociability. Physiologically, orange invigorates, motivates, and fosters eagerness. It also enhances appetite and encourages social interaction.

White, another colour of the other heroine in the title on the letter A, symbolizes pure, virginal, clean, youthful, mild, light, goodness, innocence, purity. White can represent a successful beginning. It can be used to suggest simplicity in high-tech products, (Cerrato, 2012, p. 14).

Blue, the most-used colour in the poster means that the movie will cover both the sky and the sea and is associated with open spaces, freedom, intuition, imagination, inspiration, sensitivity, trust, reliability, belonging, coolness, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth. it is often associated with depth and stability. Blue is strongly associated with tranquillity and calmness.

Social Identity and Connection

The poster portrays three character elements, three heroines, a man, and a clowder of cats.

The three heroines are displayed in the biggest size, which means they have the biggest role in the movie plot. These three different heroines represent not only different role in the movie, but also social diversity, white woman, black woman, and a Pakistani girl. There is also a man, he portrays in a smaller size compared to the three women. He is believed to be a mentor for these heroines, or a

bridge between them and their quest. There is also a symbol of support in their adventure, a clowder of cats.



Figure 6 Hoopty Spaceships

In addition to the main focus of the poster, an intriguing element that captures attention is the presence of eleven spacecraft known as the Hoopty. These spacecraft are designated for use by the protagonist team, suggesting a significant role in the storyline. The inclusion of these unique vehicles hints at a futuristic or otherworldly setting, adding an extra layer of excitement and anticipation for the audience. The name "Hoopty" itself may imply a sense of informality or unconventional design, sparking curiosity about the capabilities and features of these spacecraft. Altogether, the poster not only showcases the central theme but also introduces a compelling aspect that sparks interest in the narrative's technological and adventurous elements.

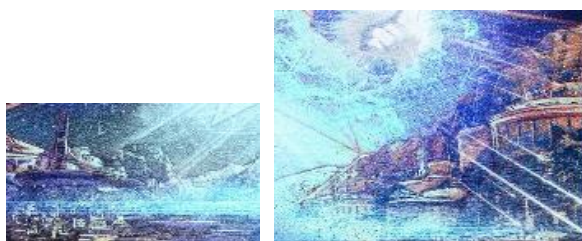


Figure 7 Various Locations

The poster further intrigues viewers with the inclusion of diverse buildings from various locations. Each location is serving as a visual representation of the places the heroines are set to visit throughout the movie. These structures not only contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the poster, but also provide subtle clues about the unfolding narrative. The assortment of buildings suggests a rich and varied setting, hinting at a storyline that spans different locales and possibly delves into cultural or architectural diversity. The deliberate placement of these structures implies a strategic connection to the main plot, inviting the audience to speculate on the significance of each location in relation to the heroines' journey. In essence, the inclusion of these buildings adds depth to the visual storytelling, fostering a sense of anticipation and curiosity about the cinematic experience.

Conclusion

Movie posters are crucial elements within the extensive realm of film marketing, functioning as visual representatives that is intended to charm and attract potential viewers. Created with meticulous care, these posters are formulated to generate a compelling allure, providing an enticing preview of the cinematic adventure ahead. The multimodal examination of film posters acts as an entry point to comprehend the intricacies of visual communication and the intentional decisions undertaken by filmmakers and advertisers. It reveals the depth of significance concealed within apparently uncomplicated promotional materials, underscoring the influence of visuals and language in molding how audiences perceive and anticipate a movie.

In analysing The Marvels movie posters through a multimodal lens provides an intriguing investigation into the complex relationship between visual and textual components, influencing how audiences perceive the film. This examination highlights that each aspect, from colour selection to

font design, carries substantial meaning and plays a crucial role in shaping the intended message. Visual elements, including images, arrangement, and overall design, collaborate with textual features such as taglines, titles, and credits craft narratives and elicit emotional responses. The incorporation of Teun A. van Dijk's discursive dimension emphasizes the significant role of language and representation in molding societal views and ideologies.

Furthermore, this examination unveiled the subtle ways in which societal, cultural, and cognitive factors impact interpretation. The deliberate placement of actors or production credits, the incorporation of specific colours or symbols, and even the proportions of characters on the poster all contribute significantly to engaging audiences and establishing expectations. Delving into the social cognitive dimension within these posters provides insights into how audience reception is shaped by cultural contexts and cognitive mechanisms.

References

- Bednarek, M. a. (2012). *News Discourse*. London: Continuum.
- Bernard, H. (2022). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative methods*. 3rd edition. Walnut Creek: California.: AltaMira Press.
- Cerrato, H. (2012). The meaning of colors. *The graphic designer*.
- Chen, Y. & Gao. (2014). Interpretation of movie posters from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis. *GSTF Journal on Education (JEd)*, 1(1).
- Colorafi, K. J. (2016). Qualitative descriptive methods in health science research. *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal* 9, 16-25.
- Johnstone, B. (2017). *Discourse analysis*. Hoboken, New Jersey, Amerika: John Wiley & Sons.
- Knox, J. (2007). Visual-verbal communication on newspaper home pages. *Visual Communication*, 6(1), 19–55.
- Kress, G. &. (2020). Reading images: The grammar of visual design. *Routledge*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203619728>
- Kress, G. (1990). Critical discourse analysis. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 11, 84–99.
- Kress, G. a. (n.d.).
- Kress, G. a. (1998). *Front pages: (the critical) analysis of newspaper layout*. In A. Bell and P. Garrett, eds., *Approaches to Media Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lewis, J. &. (2006). Culture and communication: can landscape visualization improve forest management consultation with indigenous communities? *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 77:291–313.
- Marvel. (2023, November). Retrieved from Marvel: <https://www.marvel.com/movies/the-marvels>
- Morgan, A. (2010.). Discourse Analysis: An Overview for the Neophyte Research. . *Journal of Health and Social Care Improvement, University of Wolverhampton.*, 1(7),147-148.
- Nguyen, T. T. (2021). A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Romantic Comedy Movie Posters. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 37(3).
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2011). *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction*. Sage.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2014). Critical discourse analysis and multimodality. *Contemporary critical discourse studies*, 281-295.

Yin, L. &. (2021). Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Movie Poster Little Big Soldier. *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics*, 7(3), 101-105.