Breaking Stereotypes: A Multimodal Analysis of the Representation of the Female Lead in the Animation Movie *Brave*

Sarah Shehatta

Assistant Lecturer, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation, Misr University for Science and Technology (MUST), Egypt.

Abstract

The social, cultural and pedagogical influence of animated movies has been subject to academic scrutiny from multiple disciplines including sociology, media and discourse studies. Several research attempts have underlined the gender ideologies and portrayals (of female characters) in animated movies employing numerous analytical approaches, including content analysis and cultural critical approaches. However, none of these attempts have approached gender representations in animated movies from a multimodal perspective. Therefore, this study aims at revealing the underlying gender ideologies embedded in animated movies through examining the depiction of the female lead in one of the most popular Disney/Pixar animation movies, *Brave* (2012) applying a multimodal analysis of the linguistic and visual modes. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model has been utilized to analyze one linguistic feature, i.e., politeness, in relation to the representation of the female protagonist, Merida. Also, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic multimodal model for visual analysis has been applied to examine the visual rendering of Merida. Findings have revealed how the linguistic and visual modes integrate to construct the character of the female protagonist, breaking the stereotypical portrayal the obedient and passive princess in earlier animation movies, which in turn has significant implications in relation to animation viewers, producers and scholars.

Keywords: gender ideology, female representation, stereotyping, politeness, visual analysis, animation movies

1. Introduction

The social, cultural and pedagogical influence of animated films has been subject to academic scrutiny from multiple disciplines including sociology, media and discourse studies. Analysts have attempted to expose the hidden ideologies, especially about gender, that impacts children's perceptions and contribute in the construction of their social identity. The value and influence of animation movies on its viewers has become evident. As children watch animated films and television cartoons repeatedly in their homes, the pedagogical effects of these productions are magnified (Mares 1998). For example, Giroux (1994) stressed how animated films "appear to inspire at least as much cultural authority… for teaching specific roles, values, and ideals as do more traditional sites of learning" (p. 23). Also, Indhumathi (2019) reported evidence of the influence of animated movies, particularly Disney, on children's perceptions of sex roles.

Ideologies about gender are presented in the entertaining form of children's animated films. According to Hinkins (2007), such ideologies are powerful and might be dangerous since they propagate certain societal values and beliefs. She argued that children's animated films provide adult audience with an opportunity to reconsider societal structures and cultural practices, while enabling children to understand themselves as individuals within their society. Gender ideologies can be promoted implicitly or explicitly in children's animated movies, spreading particular idealized assumptions and expectations. These ideologies are likely to be transferred from one generation to the next through children's films maintaining its continuous pedagogic function (Hinkins, 2007).

2. Review of the Literature

Disney animated movies in particular have been given much attention for its long history and popular production. Gender-role stereotyping of Disney's Princesses has been the subject of scrutiny of many scholars and analysts (e.g., Bálint, 2013; Dundes, 2001; Elnahla, 2015; Lacroix, 2004; Letaif, 2015; Maity, 2014; Seybold & Rondolina, 2018; Sun & Scharrer, 2004; Whitely, 2013). Bálint (2013), for instance, examined the portrayal of four of Disney's female characters between 1922 and 1948, from a feminist perspective. Findings indicated that the depicted females represented stereotypes of young, beautiful, innocent, passive and submissive women. Bálint concluded that such portrayals might be disturbing for the young audiences.

Another attempt to investigate female stereotyping in Disney animated films is Maity's (2014) study. The study reported that Disney's female roles were either heroines, princesses, queens or homemakers. These female characters were rendered as beautiful, vulnerable and compliant. They suffer in silence as victims in the patriarchal society; but they get rewarded eventually by marrying handsome Princes and living happily. Maity also noted that in numerous instances the female protagonist played a supporting role to the male protagonist. Weak Princesses always needed to be rescued by Prince Charming (Maity, 2014). Moreover, self-sacrifice for finding happiness with a dominant male or for the sake of others appeared as a characteristic quality in some of Disney's princesses (Maity, 2014). Snow white, Cinderella, Belle, Pocahontas and Mulan are all examples of negative portrayals of females in Disney movies. Therefore, Maity (2014) suggested that Disney movies are unhealthy for young girls to watch since they reinforce male dominance through certain physical, social and behavioral attributes and practices. For that, these movies have been criticized for their negative, stereotypical and unrealistic portrayal of female characters (Maity, 2014).

Stereotyping is also evident in representations of heroines and villainesses in Disney animated films. Elnahla (2015), for instance, investigated the intersection of age and gender in

the characterization of the villainesses in six of Disney's popular animated films: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Tangled* (2010), and *Frozen* (2013). She pointed out that heroines are depicted as young, attractive and noble whereas villainesses are rendered as old, unattractive, and semi-elite social misfits who constantly tried to obtain youth, beauty and/or power. Elnahla concluded that Disney can be harmful for children as it reinforces stereotypical ideals and values of youthful beauty in women. For this, Elnahla asserts that we, as viewers, need to value women's mature beauty. She also suggested that we need to replace images of passive and dependent heroines with images of intelligent and independent women that provide children with rather positive female role models.

Furthermore, Seybold and Rondolina's (2018) systematic textual analysis of the Disney Renaissance films' narratives revealed how conformity was presented as a primary source of happiness and an essential indicator of individuality. Protagonists in Disney's narratives, Seybold and Rondolina elucidated, strived to attain social conformity. Female protagonists seemed willing to sacrifice their agency to find males partners or spouses. Showing romantic interest in a racially homogenous, physically attractive, and heterosexual male partner was an aspect of social conformity. They concluded that Disney Renaissance animated movies promote values of conformity, romance and patriarchal dominance.

Other analysts examined the evolution of female characters in animation movies (e.g., Davis, 2014; Guzerix, 2013; Lueke, 2014). The image of the distressed, helpless and passive princess has been gradually changed to be brave, empowered and leading heroine. For example, from a feminist perspective, Guizerix (2013) traced the evolution of the Disney Princess. Portrayals of Disney Princesses have developed in terms of appearance, attitude, relationships, and cultural heritage. They are represented as more independent, diverse, and realistic. Generally, Guizerix noted how Disney reinforces loyalty, generosity, kindness, bravery, and honesty as important qualities of female characters.

Moreover, Lueke (2014) argued that Disney princesses provide children with positive female role models. In other words, portrayal of princesses has gradually evolved away from the past gender stereotypes in order to advocate for women's equality and success. Lueke elucidated that these princesses represented model citizens of their respective time periods advocating for gender equality while promoting functional relationships and pursuing happiness. For example, Snow White is said to represent the hardworking attitude needed during the 1930s. Cinderella seems to maintain a positive attitude for self-preservation whereas Pocahontas advocates for individuality despite societal expectations. Merida defies traditional expectations; and finally, Anna and Elsa represent strong confident and successful women.

Also, Davis (2014) reported that portrayals of various Disney princesses have progressed. These Princesses were portrayed helpless and less competent than their male counterparts. Disney Princesses have evolved into well-rounded independent individuals who no longer rely on men to have true love and happiness (Matyas 2010). Davis concluded that every Disney Princess movie has marked a step of progress; therefore she has anticipated further progression in the future productions of Disney animations.

A number of analysts have critically approached the representation of the female lead in Disney/Pixar's *Brave* highlighting her distinctive characterization (Itmeizeh & Ma'ayeh, 2017; Leader, 2017; Tóth, 2017; Warner, 2015). For example, Warner (2015) argued that Merida in *Brave* (2012) and Anna and Elsa in *Frozen* (2013) offer positive, post-feminist representations of female leads in animated films. These princesses are portrayed struggling and triumphing for female familial love instead of for romantic heterosexual love. Warner

concluded that twenty-first century princess stories succeeded in depicting princesses' journeys finding their own identities defying conventional social expectations.

Leader (2017) focused on one major visual aspect in the depiction of the female heroines in *Brave* and *Tangled*, namely the hair and its cultural significance. Merida, Leader stated, is depicted with "excessively full, bright, free-flowing photorealistic hair that features prominently in the mis-en-scene" (p.2). Unlike Rapunzel, Merida's hair is not functional in the plot; however, it contributes to the construction of her identity "as a rebellious tomboy" and at the same time it frames "her slight, feminine torso" (p.2) with its dense unruly curls that are yet glamorous, empowering and girly.

Tóth (2017) examined the representation of violent women in the Disney animated films including the Wicked Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), Merida in *Brave* (2012), Maleficent in *Maleficent* (2014), and Moana and Te Fiti in *Moana* (2016) among others. In fact, Tóth argued that Disney has developed the portrayal of princesses and has created well-rounded female figures. Commenting on the representation of Merida, Tóth asserted that she represents a "woman warrior" (p.207) who fights against typical feminine expectations. She is characterized by confidence, bravery and fierceness (Tóth, 2017).

In addition, Itmeizeh and Ma'ayeh (2017) compared two Disney films; *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Brave* (2012) tracing the evolution of the princess portrayals and linguistic features. The study applied content analysis of the themes presented in the two films in relation to gender roles and women's linguistic features. Findings highlighted how Disney took a major step towards positive representation of women. In fact, depiction of Merida deviates from the stereotypical representation of the princess rendered by Snow White. In terms of appearance, Merida, as a princess, maintains her feminine looks. However**,** she strives for the freedom to choose her path. She is not involved the traditional Disney romantic love story; but rather depicted reconciling her tensed relationship with her mother. Merida is also characterized as an intelligent, strong and confident woman who disobeys orders and rejects traditional marriage. In terms of linguistic features, Itmeizeh and Ma'ayeh focused on three linguistic features of female protagonists in the two films based on Lackoff's (1975) proposed model of women's language, namely tag questions, empty adjectives and lexical hedges. Nonetheless, these findings did not indicate how women's language have evolved or contributed to the representation female protagonists in the selected two animated movies.

Two more studies approached the language usage in animated movies (Benabdellah, 2018; Eisenhauer, 2017). Eisenhauer (2017) applied a quantitative language analysis in relation to gender representation in a selection of Disney Princess films. The study focused on directives as a speech act defined by Searle (1969) revealing how gender, urgency, and power dynamics all play a significant role in determining the use of mitigation strategies with directives. Eisenhauer also noted through qualitative analysis that gender and power were closely correlated affecting female and male use of directive. Female characters mitigated their directives more heavily even in positions of power, than male characters that tended to use direct and aggravated directives to display power. Female villains and "good" women with domestic authority represented two exceptions in using bald directives (Eisenhauer, 2017).

Finally, Benabdellah (2018) examined the intersection between gender and impoliteness in a selection of the highest grossing Disney animated movies. The study investigated how female and male characters use impolite discourse strategies, proposed by Culpeper's (2010), to shape their social identities and re/produce their power. Findings pointed out how characters of both genders use impoliteness strategies to show their feelings and attitudes. However, Benabdellah also reported that female protagonists perform impoliteness

less frequently than do men. This finding suggested that females are placed in secondary position while males are recognized as the dominant language users. Other features of female lead characters' communicative speech include presuppositions and challenging questions, and message enforcers. On the other hand, males tend to perform condescension, complaints or pointed criticism, and threats. Insults and Silencers are used by both genders with slight differences (Benabdellah, 2018). Additionally, Disney princesses never perform dismissals whereas males do. Whereas Disney heroines produce impoliteness to express their challenge, anger, disapproval and claim power; the heroes rely on impoliteness to threat, show power, provoke, wish to entertain, and express disappointment or panic. Benabdellah concluded that Disney heroines are more polite than males.

Taken together, these studies have demonstrated the growing interest in the representation of gender roles and stereotypes, particularly in female portrayals, in Disney's animated movies. Unfortunately, there seems to have been very little analysis of language and image; most of the studies have tended to concentrate on thematic content and plots (Unger &Sunderland, 2005), applying content and thematic analyses. To my knowledge, there has been no attempt to examine the gender role portrayals from a multimodal perspective. No study to date has approached the representation of the female lead in Disney's *Brave* applying a systematic, qualitative pragmatic and visual analyses.

3. Aim and Design of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the representation of the female lead, Merida, in the animated movie *Brave* (2012), revealing to what extent it breaks the pervasive gender stereotypes in Disney animated films. The study aimed to examine how the linguistic mode, particularly the use of politeness, and the visual mode integrate to construct the female identity of the protagonist Merida in a way that breaks traditional stereotypical representation of females in Disney Princess animations. Thus, the study addressed the research question: ***How is the female identity of the protagonist represented linguistically and visually?*** To answer this question, this study adopted a qualitative-quantitative research design applying an eclectic multimodal approach to the analysis of language and visual representation of the female protagonist, Merida, in *Brave*.

4. Data of the Study

Brave is an adventure comedy family fantasy animation film that was released in June, 2012. The film was produced by Pixar Studios but distributed by Disney. However, the two companies have become one since Walt Disney Studios bought Pixar in 2006. The film was ranked #1 at the box office and earned over $538 million worldwide (Box Office Mojo). As the film producer, Katherine Sarafian, declared the protagonist, Princess Merida, is very distinct from her Disney Princess predecessors: "There's a grand tradition of Disney princesses," she claimed (Cited in Whelan, 2014, p.184). The total running time of the film is one hour, thirty three minutes. For the purpose of pragmatic analysis, the film scripted dialogue was retrieved from https://imeldasanders123.wordpress.com/pixar-brave-script/ and revised in comparison to the actual dialogue used in the film's released DVD version.

5. Synopsis of the Story

Brave depicts the story of Merida, a Scottish princess, who thrives for her freedom and independence. She has a growing passion for physical activities including horse riding and archery since her childhood. Merida is constantly forced by her mother, Queen Elinor, to be an obedient daughter and a conforming princess. Being a disobedient daughter and a rebellious princess, Merida ruins Elinor's plans for her betrothal by defeating her suitors in an archery

competition. This escalates the clash between the mother and the daughter. Failing to reach an agreement with her mother, Merida accidentally gets help from a witch who offers her a magical spell that transforms Elinor temporarily into a bear. This magical transformation reverses the roles between the mother and the daughter, giving Merida the lead and putting Elinor in a follower's position. Such a role reversal helps both ladies to bond and overcome their differences. Eventually, in an attempt to break the magical spell of transformation, Merida reconciles with her mother, apologizes for all her mischief, and mends their bond as daughter and mother. Only then, Merida breaks the spell and Elinor transforms back into her human body.

6. Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of pragmatic analysis, Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness was utilized. This model is based on Goffman's (1967) concept of *face* which refers to an individual's self-image and its wants to be free from imposition, i.e., *negative face*, and to be appreciated by others, i.e., *positive face* (1987, p.61). The term *face threatening acts* (FTAs), as Brown and Levinson pointed out, refers to acts that potentially threaten and attack an individual's *negative* and/or *positive face*. Examples of these include orders, threats, disapprovals, and complaints. On the other hand, I use the term *face supporting acts* (FSAs) to refer to acts that appeal to, support and satisfy an individual's *negative* and/or *positive face wants*. These include expressions of approval, appreciation, and apologies. In fact, FSAs are Brown and Levinson's *positive* and *negative politeness* when used to satisfy an individual's *face wants* fully rather than to redress FTAs.

FTAs and FSAs are context-bound; that is an act is determined as threatening or supporting based on three circumstantial aspects, i.e., social distance between interactants, their power relations and the rank of imposition in the act itself. These sociological variables calculate the impact of an act on the interactants. Accordingly, the choice of the politeness strategy is made. Brown and Levinson's (1987) model offers a detailed list of politeness strategies and sub-strategies that are utilized with FTAs in different contexts. These include unmitigated *Bald-on-record* strategies that guarantee honesty and efficiency, mitigated *on-record with redress* strategies that appeal to either *positive* or *negative face* wants, i.e., *positive* or *negative politeness*, and *off record* strategies that render FTAs indirectly, e.g., using irony or metaphors. I applied Brown and Levinson's politeness model to analyze instances of FTAs and FSAs performed by the female protagonist highlighting their different contexts of use, types of acts and politeness strategies utilized which contribute to the construction of the protagonist's female identity.

For the purpose of visual analysis of the female protagonist's depiction I applied Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design. The selected film was divided into scenes; then into key frames. Such frames were examined in the light of three dimensions; Representational, Interactive and compositional. Regarding the Representational dimension, analysis was concerned with the narrative representation of processes and participants' roles. That is how the protagonist plays different roles, i.e., Actors, Goals, Reactors and Phenomena, within the various action and reaction processes. However, analysis was limited to processes that are identified visually, namely Action and Reaction processes. Verbal and mental processes are mainly represented in linguistic forms rather than through visual images; therefore, they lie beyond the scope of my analysis.

Moreover, the Interactive dimension mainly examined the viewers' position in relation to the protagonist, i.e., their social distance, degree of engagement, and attitude. The viewers' position is determined through the utilized frame size, i.e., long, medium and close-up shots,

and angling, i.e., horizontal and vertical, through which the protagonist's gender identity is illustrated. Long shots, as Mascelli (1998) pointed out, provide an inclusive picture of the characters' full body, their action(s) and the setting. Close ups, on the other hand, reveal significant facial reactions, body part or movement of a character. Whereas long shots place viewers at a distance to appreciate the big picture, close ups establish personal relationships between viewers and characters as part of their own world. Mascelli (1998) also explained that medium shots place viewers at an intermediate distance from the characters which renders their actions and reactions clearly.

Intertwined with image size, angling is crucial for character depiction. Horizontal angles, i.e., frontal, three quarters, side and back, affect the viewer's involvement with the dramatic actions performed by the protagonist. For example, frontal angling engages viewers more in the depicted actions than do side or back angles. Vertical angles, i.e., low, level and high, influence the viewers' attitude towards the characters. That is, low angling might indicate the character's power over the viewers and/or over the other characters in the scene whereas high angling reflects the character's powerlessness and the viewers' superiority. Thus, the integration of image size and angle choice positions viewers in multiple ways that impact their perception and appreciation of the rendered characters and actions. For this, analysis highlights this integration and its effects on the viewers.

Finally, analysis of the Compositional dimension explored the visual salience and spatial framing of the female protagonist in the different scenes and frames. That is, the analysis revealed how a protagonist's relative size, placement and perspective, and color contrast might contribute to her portrayal as visually salient (i.e., prominent or dominant in the frames). Analysis also indicated to what extent she is spatially framed (i.e., rendered separately from others indicating disconnection) or unframed (i.e., connected with others) in relation to other participants and objects depicted within the same frame or shot. For the purpose of this paper, key scenes and frames that illustrate the visual aspects under study are provided in the Appendix (pp.28-30).

7. Pragmatic representation of Merida in *Brave*

Merida's verbal contributions to the dialogue were analyzed to identify Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) and Face Supporting Acts (FSAs) categorizing the types of FTAs and FSAs and the politeness strategies utilized. This section demonstrates how Merida's female identities as a daughter and a princess are constructed through her FTAs and FSAs addressed to other characters. Analysis essentially identifies the types of FTAs and FSAs used by/addressed Merida, the contextual aspects of their use (i.e., social distance and power relation among the protagonist and recipients/ performers of FTAs and FSAs and the rank of imposition of the acts), and the politeness strategies utilized.

Despite the continuous social pressure imposed on Merida from her mother and Queen Elinor, she is characterized by her defiance and bravery. Acting like an obedient daughter and a perfect princess is not her passion. These behavioral traits are indicated through Merida's pragmatic choices of FTAs. For example, she defies her mother's authority and disobeys her orders on several occasions. She performs FTAs including disagreeing, challenging and criticizing, repeatedly using multiple politeness strategies. One example of Merida's FTAs is Excerpt (A) which represents part of the dialogue between her and her mother. After Queen Elinor has announced the acceptance of three ruling clans to present their heirs as suitors to compete for marrying Merida, she and Merida exchange the turns below.

Excerpt (A) – Minute 00:12:18

1)**Elinor**	Honestly, Merida! I don't know why you're acting this way. This year each clan will present a suitor to compete in the games for your hand.
→2)**Merida**	*((speaking in a loud angry tone))* **I suppose a princess just does what she's told?**
3)**Elinor**	A princess does not raise her voice. Merida, this is what you've been preparing for your whole life.
→4)**Merida**	*((Merida gets up in anger))* **No! This is what you've been preparing me for my whole life!** *((she starts to walk off))* **I won't go through with it! You can't make me!**

Although this marriage is considered a convention among the ruling clans and is expected to strengthen their union, Merida does not show any concern except for herself not as a princess but as a free woman. Defying conventions, she objects to Elinor's plan and refuses to be a conforming "*princess*". First, she expresses rejection off-record in Turn 2. Merida sounds ironic as she expresses what she knows for fact in the form of a supposition "*I suppose*"; then she refers to herself in the third person "*a princess*" denying this role. Merida's statement implicitly reflects her refusal of being the passive and obedient princess who "*just does what she's told*". Then in response to Elinor's remarks about misbehavior and marriage as an ultimate goal in Turn 3, Merida performs a bald-on-record objection "*No*" highlighting that it is Elinor's desire "*this is what you've been preparing me for*" rather than Merida's own desire. Then she asserts her complete rejection "*I won't go through with it*" and challenges Elinor's power as mother and queen to force her "*You can't make me*." In fact, this excerpt represents the first conflicting exchanges between Merida and Elinor which portrays Merida as a disobedient daughter and a rebellious princess.

Another example of Merida's defiance of her mother's authority and social conventions is presented in Excerpt (B) below. This excerpt depicts part of the second confrontation between Merida and Elinor after Merida's challenging participation in the archery competition of the proposed suitors.

Excerpt (B) – Minute 00:27:39

→1)**Merida**	**O:::h! This is so unfair!**
2)**Elinor**	Huh! Unfair?
→3)**Merida**	**You were never there for me! This whole marriage is what you want! Do you ever bother to ask what I want? No! You walk around telling me what to do, what not to do! Trying to make me be like you! Well, I'm not going to be like you!**
4)**Elinor**	Ach! You're acting like a child!
→5)**Merida**	**And you're a beast! That's what you are!** *((Merida points her sword at the family tapestry that Elinor had been working on))*

In this extract, Merida performs several bald-on-record FTAs threatening Elinor's positive face. As illustrated in Turn1, she complains directly about the unfairness of being forced her to marry without her consent. She further complains in Turn 3 about her mother's

lack of support "*You were never there for me!* " and criticizes her selfishness "*This whole marriage is what you want!*". She poses a rhetorical question and answers it explicitly criticizing her mother's negligence of her desires and choices "*Do you ever bother to ask what I want? No!*". Merida also criticizes her mother's bossy attitude "*You walk around telling me what to do, what not to do! Trying to make me be like you!*", threatening Elinor's positive face through her rejection of resembling her mother "*I'm not going to be like you!*". In addition, Merida responds to Elinor's criticism of her childish behavior in Turn 4, performing a bald-on-record insult by calling Elinor "*beast*" for her heartless attitude and total inconsideration of Merida's choices and wishes. Thus, Merida's multiple on-record FTAs, i.e., complaints, criticisms and insult, defy Elinor's power as mother and queen, and render Merida as a defiant daughter and princess.

Besides being disobedient and rebellious, Merida is characterized by bravery. This quality is evident in her confrontation with her father, King Fergus, where she appears defending her mother, who has been transformed into a bear with a magical spell. When Fergus mistakes Elinor, in her bear form, for the evil wild bear Mordu and decides to kill her, Merida prevents him and fights him with her sword. They exchange the turns as in Excerpt (C) below.

Excerpt (C) – Minute 01:17:07

	((Just as Fergus is about to strike Elinor, Merida stops him by shooting her arrow at his sword))
→1)**Merida**	**Get back! That's my mother!**
2)**Fergus**	Are you out of your mind, lass?
3)**Merida**	Mom, are you hurt?
	*((suddenly Fergus **knocks Merida out** of the way and goes to strike Elinor again when **Merida grabs hold of a sword** and stops him))*
4)**Fergus**	Merida!
→	*((**she pushes her father back**))*
→5)**Merida**	**I'll not let you kill my mother!**

This extract includes three FTAs performed by Merida threatening Fergus' face wants. As she shoots her arrow at Fergus' sword to stop him from striking Elinor, the bear, Merida utters a bald-on-record order "*Get back!*" followed by the assertion "*That's my mother!*" Her unmitigated FTA threatens Fergus' positive face wants directly since it challenges his power as father and king. Therefore, he immediately questions her sanity, in Turn 2. In response, Merida ignores his question completely and focuses her attention on her tied down mother, trying to reassure her, as indicated in Turn 3. The third FTA is evident in Turn 5; Merida performs a bald-on-record threatening assertion "*I'll not let you kill my mother!*" challenging Fergus to defend her mother against his attacks. This whole exchange demonstrates how brave Merida is to confront her father, the leader king who fights bears, to protect her mother which in turn portrays her as heroic princess and a devoted daughter.

In addition to FTAs, Merida's FSAs contribute to her representation as an unconventional princess. On particular occasions, Merida performs FSAs to other F/M characters. Such FSAs include praise and expression of love among other acts. These FSAs mainly appeal to others' positive face wants. Excerpts (D) and (E) exemplify Merida's FSAs to F/M characters rendering her different roles as a princess and a daughter. As a princess,

Merida acts dutifully and mends the bond between her clan and the other clans. This is illustrated in Excerpt (D) below which represents part of Merida's speech to the lords of the three ruling clans.

Excerpt (D) – Minute 01:05:35

1)A Lord	(V.O.) Ahh! It's just a legend.
→2)**Merida**	Legends are lessons. They ring with truths. Our kingdom is young. Our stories are not yet legends. But in them, **our bond was struck.** Our clans were once enemies. But when invaders threatened us from the sea**, you joined together to defend our lands. You fought for each other. You risked everything for each other. Lord MacGuffin, my dad saved your life stopping an arrow as you ran to Dingwall's aid.**
3)Lord MacGuffin	Aye, and I'll never forget it=
→4)**Merida**	**=and lord Macintosh, you saved my dad when you charged in on heavy horse and held off the advance. And we all know how lord Dingwall broke the enemy line=**
5)Lord Macintosh	=With a mighty throw of his spear=
6)Lord Dingwall	=I was aiming at you, you big tumshie. *((they laugh))*

In this extract, Merida majorly appeals to the lords' positive face wants performing multiple FSAs. As shown in Turn 2, she minimizes the disagreement with one of the lords who calls her story "*a legend*" asserting the value of legendary stories "Legends are lessons. They ring with truths". In the same turn, she repeatedly uses in-group identity marker, i.e., the first person plural pronouns "our" and "us" to emphasize in-group membership; "*Our kingdom*", "*Our stories*", "*our bond*", "*Our clans*" and "*invaders threatened us*", and "*our lands*". She also praises the lord's union "*you joined together to defend*", "*You fought for each other*" and "*You risked everything for each other.*" Then Merida conveys interest in and admiration of several incidences of mutual support between the lords including her father; "*my dad saved your life*" and in Turn 4 "*you saved my dad*" and "*And we all know how lord Dingwall broke the enemy line*". These FSAs strengthen the ties between the lords which motivate them to interact with Merida in Turns 3, 5 and 6, agreeing with her and collaborating to complete her turns. In fact the whole exchange represents how Merida's FSAs contribute to her portrayal as an eloquent and dutiful princess who acts responsibly and amends her mistakes.

As a daughter, Merida eventually mends the bond with her mother. This is illustrated in Excerpt (E) below where she is depicted with Elinor the bear trying to break the magical spell and transform her mother back into her human shape.

Excerpt (E) – Minute 1:19:50

→1) Merida	Oh, mom, I'm sorry. This is all my fault. I did this to you, to us.
	((She tearfully hugs Elinor))
→2)Merida	You've always been there for me. You've never given up on me. I just need you back. I want you back, mommy. I love you.

This excerpt illustrates how Merida appeals to Elinor's negative and positive face wants using multiple FSAs. In Turn 1, she apologizes to her mother and admits her mistake, i.e., defying Elinor and the lords of the clans. This turn appeals to Elinor's negative face wants employing negative politeness strategies, namely apology. Then she continues intensifies expression of gratefulness towards Elinor's support "*You've always been there for me*" and "*You've never given up on me*" which appeal to Elinor's positive face need to be appreciated. Merida also expresses her need for her mother using the address form "*mommy*" which emphasizes the daughter-mother intimate bond. Eventually, she expresses her love to Elinor appealing to her positive face. These various FSAs represent Merida as a loving daughter, which contradicts her portrayal as rebellious and competitive as pointed out through her FTAs above.

Based on the qualitative and quantitative pragmatic analysis of Merida's turns in the dialogue, her major characteristics as a female protagonist are evident. First, qualitative analysis of her pragmatic choices reveals her noncompliance and competitiveness. Merida disagrees, criticizes, challenges, complains and orders repeatedly which threatens the face wants of other characters who might be of higher social status and power than she does, including her mother, Queen Elinor, and the Lords of the Clans.

Table 1. Face threatening /supporting Acts by **Merida**

Total No. of Turns by Merida		204	Percentage
Face Threatening Acts	**Bald on record**	42	**20.6%**
	Pos. Pol.	12	5.9%
	Neg. Pol.	39	19.1%
	Off record	28	13.7%
	Mixed strategies	13	6.4%
Total		134	
Percentage		**65.7%**	
Face Supporting Acts	**Pos. Pol.**	28	13.7%
	Neg. Pol.	2	1%
	Mixed strategies	2	1%
Total		32	
Percentage		**15.7%**	
FTAs &FSAs mixed turns		2	
Percentage		**1%**	
Excluded turns		36	
Percentage		**17.6%**	

Note. Pos. Pol.= Positive Politeness; Neg. Pol.= Negative Politeness.

As indicated in Table 1 above, quantitative analysis reveals that Merida performs FTAs (65.7%) more frequently than she performs FSAs (15.7%). This in turn contributes to the portrayal of her as a disobedient daughter and a rebellious princess who defies her family and breaks social conventions. Moreover, it is observed that Merida recurrently threatens others' face wants on-record; either bald on record (20.6%) or using on-record with negative politeness redressive strategies (19.1%). Her frequent performance of FTAs is exhibited in her constant confrontations and conflicts with her mother. This contributes to her characterization as disobedient, challenging, and nonconforming. This portrayal breaks the stereotypical image of the obedient, polite and conforming princess that often appears in Disney's animations.

8. Visual representation of Merida in *Brave*

Analysis of Merida's visual representation included three dimensions; representational, interactive, and compositional. The representational dimension underlined the processes and the participant roles through which Merida is depicted visually. The interactive dimension concerns how Merida is represented in relation to the viewers through different image sizes and angling techniques. Finally, the compositional dimension reveals to what extent Merida is rendered as a visually salient figure and framed, i.e., connected/ disconnected, in relation to other visual subjects in the frames. This section tackles several examples of Merida's visual rendering highlighting the major characteristics of her female identity as a daughter and, princess, a woman. (The examined frames are provided in Visual Appendix - *Brave* (pp. 28-30).

8.1. Processes and roles

In *Brave*, Merida provides an unusual model of a princess. She is characterized by being messy, adventurous, brave, independent and competitive. These five major characteristics are indicated visually through the action processes in which Merida is involved. It is evident in multiple transactional action processes that Merida plays the participant role of Actor, performing the action processes. First, messiness appears to be an obvious trait of Merida's female personality. Her behavior as well as in physical appearance render her as a chaotic person. She is depicted on several frames grabbing food items, e.g., chicken, muffins, or apples as illustrated in Frame 1, and eating them with her bare hands. This is an act of savages rather than of a princess of a royal family. She is also depicted careless of that image of the perfect princess. So she jumps over stair bar inside the royal castle, runs wildly through servants on the stairs as rendered in Frame 2; and then jumps on a candle stand beside the stairs and slides down to reach the ground. Such a series of action processes illustrates Merida's impulsive behavior. In terms of messy physical appearance, Merida's orange messy hair stands out to deviate from the perfectly styled hair of old princesses. Due to her messy curls, she appears as Goal in the process of combing her hair, as depicted in Frame 21, and covering it in such an elegant and royal style, as rendered in Frame 28, performed by the mother, Queen Elinor. In these processes, Merida undergoes the action process rather than carrying it out which in turn indicate her lack of interest in fitting the stereotypical role of the elegant and beautiful princess. In fact, she is forced by the Queen to have this look to be able to obtain a suitor for marriage, the thing that lies beyond Merida's concern. These instances of action processes reflect how Merida breaks the unrealistic image of orderly noble princesses and introduces the model of a rather natural and lively princess.

The second major quality of Merida's character is being adventurous which is demonstrated through multiple action processes where she appears as the Actor. Examples of these include climbing mountains, as shown in Frame 3, reaching the summit, and riding her horse through the woods, as illustrated in Frame 4. These transactional action processes

represent Merida as an adventurous princess who is willing to test her limits and who is brave enough to take risks. Therefore, bravery is a third prominent trait of Merida's character. this trait is manifested through numerous action processes that she carries out as Actor including defending and rescuing her mother from being killed by King Fergus as displayed in Frames 13 and 14. On two occasions, Merida appears as a Goal in the action process of assault carried out by the evil bear Mordu; Frame 24 represents one example. However, on occasions Merida exhibits courage in defending herself using different weapons. Frame 12 pictures Merida shooting her arrows at Mordu as he attacks her for the first time in the old castle; Frames 17 and 18 depicts her fighting Mordu fearlessly in the woods. Also at the witch's cottage, Merida is threatened by all the witches' knives and carving tools in order to leave, as illustrated in Frame 23; however, she refuses to leave and stands confidently negotiating with the witch until she attains her goal. All these action processes contribute in the construction of Merida's character a confident and bold princess which deviates from the stereotypical portrayal of the fearful and vulnerable princess of early Disney movies.

Very much related to Merida's bravery is her skillful use of different weapons in numerous transactional action processes. For example, she is pictured practicing shooting arrows as illustrated in Frame 5, hitting multiple targets and manifesting her excellence. This is also indicated during the scene of the suitors' competition, as exemplified in Frames 35 and 36 where she manages to hit all three targets perfectly defeating all three suitors. Moreover, Merida is portrayed skillful in using the sword. She appears practicing in her room, as shown in Frame 6; she is depicted hitting on the poles of her bed right and left. She also uses her sword to defy her mother in the confrontation scene after participating in the archery competition. As illustrated in Frame 38, Merida ruins the tapestry defying her mother and breaking their bond, for which action she gets punished by her mother, as pictured in Frame 22, when Elinor takes Merida's archery bow and burns it in fire. In fighting, Merida exhibits competence in using her archery and sword on several occasions; against Mordu and King Fergus as pointed out above. In these different action processes, she plays the role of Actor, establishing her character as a brave and skillful warrior princess. Such representation challenges the stereotypical depiction of Disney's past helpless and submissive princesses.

Independence is the fifth characteristic of Merida. This quality is evident through many action processes that she performs including taking care of her own horse; i.e., cleaning under it and bathing it, as pictured in Frames 7 and 8. These action processes are usually carried out by servants or horse caretakers in the royal castle; yet, Merida plays the Actor role performing such action processes independently. Another example of Merida's autonomy is represented in providing food for herself and her mother, as depicted in Frames 9 and 10. The frames portray Merida catching fish using her arrows, cooking and presenting it to Elinor, in her transformed shape of a bear. Furthermore, Merida appears teaching Elinor, the bear, how to catch fish when she needs more food to eat. As illustrated in Frame 11, she stands in the middle of the lake besides Elinor the bear showing her how to catch fish with her bare hands. Even when Merida is locked up by King Fergus after he discovers a bear, namely transformed Queen Elinor, in the castle, she attempts to break the door open several times to free herself. In Frame 15, for instance, she is pictured carrying a wooden chair attempting to throw it at the door to open it; and in Frame 16, she is portrayed using the fire poker stick to break the door locks. These action processes clearly contribute to Merida's portrayal as an autonomous and reliant princess.

8.2. Viewers' position

Besides processes and participants roles within the representational dimension, the visual techniques of frame size and angling contribute to the construction of Merida's female character within the interactive dimension. This section examines how shot types and angling

determine viewers' position, i.e., involvement/detachment and attitude, towards Merida. All three types of shots are utilized for her depiction, i.e., long, medium and close up shots, intertwined with different vertical and horizontal angles. However, two key shot types are heavily employed in Merida's portrayal with different effects; namely long shots and close ups. Medium shots, on the other hand, are limitedly used and with minor visual significance in relation to her gender representation. In addition, there is repeated reliance on frontal low angling and minor use of high angling creating certain attitudes in the viewers' mind. Detailed examples are tackled below.

As the female lead, Merida's actions and reactions represent the focus of attention. It is noted that major actions and physical activities are rendered through long shots to guarantee the viewers a full depiction Merida's skills and capacities. This is evident in all long shot frames that picture Merida performing unconventional physical activities including climbing mountains (Frame 3) and riding her horse (Frame 4). Although these types of shots detach the viewers from the depicted actions, they provide a comprehensive representation of Merida as skillful and brave female protagonist.

Nonetheless, Merida's rebelliousness is depicted closely through the recurrent reliance on close-up shots to engage the viewers with Merida's unconventional actions. Her excellent skills in archery are highlighted through close up shots as illustrated in Frame 25which depicts her practicing in the woods, and Frame 36 which pictures her participating in the archery competition against her suitors. Furthermore, breaking social traditions and defying her mother's instructions by tearing her dress in public to have the freedom of movement, as pictured in Frames 33 and 34, is depicted through two close-up shots that engage the viewers in the ongoing action. Frame 37 represents another example in which Merida's direct confrontation with Queen Elinor is represented closely through a head shot that guarantees the viewers' involvement in the ongoing action and tension. In fact this frame vividly illustrates Merida's defiant character as a princess who is brave to break the rules asserted by her mother, the queen. Additionally, Frame 38 depicts Merida pointing her sword towards Elinor's handmade tapestry right before tearing it in anger and defiance of her mother and social conventions. This action is rendered through a medium close shot with level frontal angling that involves the viewers in the depicted action. In all these frames, close-up shots are perfectly utilized to bring viewers close to the protagonist in order to engage with her daring actions establishing an active and strong connection between the protagonist and the viewers.

In addition, portrayal of Merida's different emotional states and reactions maintain the viewers' involvement through the constant use of close ups. Emotions including excitement (Frame 26), anger (Frame 32), frustration (Frame 39), sadness (Frame 40), happiness (Frame 42) and fear (Frame 44), are all rendered through frontal close up shots that engage the viewers and allow them to identify with the protagonist and share her different feelings and reactions. Such a variety of emotional expressions contribute to the representation of Merida as a well-rounded and more realistic character in contrast to the flat superficial and emotional princesses of Disney's past animated films. She is not simply pictured fearful and sad; but she experiences joy for success, frustration about injustice, anger about confrontation, shock about unexpected actions and fear of danger. This combination of emotional states establishes Merida's identity as complex and balanced female protagonist.

The balanced depiction of Merida is also achieved through the accurate use of vertical angling, i.e., low angling and high angling. Manifesting the positive traits of Merida, including bravery and independence, she is pictured repeatedly through low angling. This choice of angle portrays her superior in relation to the viewers and other characters. She is looked up at as a powerful princess. This is illustrated in both long shot frames that depict her physical activities

such as mountain climbing (Frame 3) and horse riding (Frame 4) and close up frames that focus on her moments of achievement including hitting every target in the archery competition (Frame 35) and finding the needle (Frame 43) to fix the tapestry to rescue her mother. From other characters' perspectives, Merida is depicted through low angling emphasizing her powerfulness and assertiveness. This is illustrated by Fame 41which represents Merida through the witch's perspective who is physically short and in need for the princess' bargain.

On other occasions, Merida is represented through high angling indicating other characters' higher social status or physical position. For example, from her parents' perspectives, Merida is rendered through high angling manifesting the familial power and royal authority of the parents Queen Elinor and King Fergus. As illustrated in Frame 27, Merida is pictured from the subjective point of view of her mother as she is telling her about the necessity of getting married to maintain the strong alliance with their kingdom. This is a medium close up shot taken from a frontal high angle that suggests Elinor's authority as a mother and queen over her daughter and princess. Moreover, Frame 30 pictures Merida sitting next to Fergus during the archery competition and Frame 14 Merida fighting Fergus to rescue Elinor the bear. Both frames are over the shoulder (OST) medium close shots from high frontal angling indicating how Merida occupies a less powerful status in contrast to her father the King. In addition to parents' superior perspective, Merida is portrayed through the perspective of other characters with powerful and physically higher statuses such as the evil bear Mordu. To illustrate, Frames 12 and 17 picture her through the POV of Mordu the evil bear during their two confrontations. In both frames, Merida is looked down at indicating her lower physical position and her life-threatening situation; however her bravery is manifested by her determination to fight back despite the huge size and the physical power of the bear Mordu. In these examples, the use of high angling does not indicate Merida's powerlessness; but it contributes to her rendering as a fearless female warrior.

8.3. Composition

Analysis of the compositional dimension in Merida's visual representation focuses on the two elements; visual salience and spatial framing. Due to her small body size in comparison, Merida is rarely portrayed as visually salient. However, visual salience is achieved through other compositional factors, i.e., color contrast, placement, perspective, and focus. Besides, spatial framing contributes to the portrayal of Merida's individuality as a nonconforming princess and daughter.

Regarding visual salience, Merida appears visually salient in frames to highlight her emotional reactions with regards to different situations. The most distinctive feature is Merida's hair that breaks the stereotypical image of conservative and tidy princesses. Her hair makes her stand out visually in the frames whether she is depicted individually or with other visual subjects. It's bright orange color and long flowing curls emphasize her femininity and at the same time represent her defiant character. This is evident in Frames 45 and 46 which picture Merida and Elinor. In Frame 45 Merida's hair volume and bright color allow her to occupy one third of the frame; she is foregrounded indicating her boredom at the formal gathering of the royal family with the presence of the Queen who appears partially at the background with a hazy focus. Another example rendering Merida's emotional reactions is Frame 46 which represents her distress for being forced to comply with her mother's orders. She stands out in the frame due to her distinctive hair that makes her occupy two thirds of the frame whereas her mother is pictured in the far background with no clear focus. In both frames, visual salience is achieved through color, size, perspective and focus. Frame 47 represents a third example in which Merida is foregrounded magnifying her emotional reaction of discomfort towards her tight dress. In these three examples, Merida is portrayed as a visually prominent subject,

magnifying her different emotional states that in turn contribute to her portrayal as a nonconforming princess.

In comparison to her father, Merida has a small body size. Therefore, when she appears with him in a frame, he seems more prominent than she does. However in certain frames, Merida is depicted visually salient despite the presence of King Fergus as illustrated in Frame 48. This frame pictures Merida in the center of the frame during her eloquent speech addressing the kings of the clans. King Fergus appears in the background; yet the prominence is given to Merida who dominates the frame suggesting her influence over the male-dominated context, breaking the stereotype of the subservient princess.

Besides visual salience, spatial framing contributes to the portrayal of Merida's distinct individuality as princess. Frame 49 illustrates how Merida's skill in horse riding is framed through the gate of the castle walls. In fact the combination of long shot frontal low angling and magnify Merida's portrayal on the back of her horse against the gate in the background. This frame depicts her as a noble knight rather than a submissive princess. Merida's unruly behavior is framed, and therefore prominent, on different occasions. One example is Frame 50 which pictures Merida after King Fergus has locked her up in her room when he has seen her with Elinor the bear. The frame displays Merida screaming at the door window calling for her maiden to open the door for her. The screaming face stands out in the center of the window frame breaking the stereotype of the gracious and decent princess and introducing a different model of impulsive and unruly princess.

As well, strong framing is heavily employed to represent Merida apart from other characters emphasizing her unique personality and unconventional behavior. For example, strong framing is utilized to highlight Merida's distinctive skills as illustrated in several frames, including horse riding (Frame 4), archery (Frames 5 and 35), and fishing (Frame 9). These instances of strong framing represent Merida's distinct individuality as a daring and athletic princess. Strong framing is also employed to indicate disconnection between Merida and other characters at time of conflict. For example, during her confrontations with Queen Elinor at the dinner scene and later after the archery competition, the argument between Merida and Elinor is depicted using strong framing of each character manifesting the disconnection and the conflict of opinions between the two characters. Thus, strong framing in these instances highlights the communication gap between the daughter and her mother which contributes to the representation of Merida as a disobedient daughter.

In addition, both framing and the absence of framing are utilized in the rendering of Merida as a caring and loving daughter. Throughout the film, Merida is strongly framed suggesting her struggles for her freedom of action and choice against her mother's will. However, after she has caused her mother to transform into a bear using the witch's magical spell, they started to connect as daughter and mother. Both of them can appear framed, as illustrated in Frame 51, indicating their connection during the hard time they both experience. Their bond develops and appears in their shared activities, such as playing with water in the lake as depicted in Frame 19 and kissing each other as pictured in Frame 20. In both frames, the vector formed by their splashes of water, mutual gaze and shaped actions demonstrates their bonding portraying Merida as a loving daughter. Eventually, the daughter-mother bond is mended by the brave daughter and emphasized through the framing of Merida and Elinor against the frame of the tapestry, as illustrated in Frame 52. This frame pictures the connection between Merida and Elinor created by their mutual gaze and physical touch; this reflects familial love as a key feature of Merida's characterization.

9. Discussion and implications

This study aimed to answer one main research question that is ***How is the female identity of the protagonist represented linguistically and visually?*** To address the linguistic aspect of the protagonist's representation, a pragmatic analysis was conducted focusing on how Merida's female identity is constructed through performing FTAs and FSAs. Then, to address the visual aspect of her representation, the three dimensions of visual analysis, namely the representational comprised of processes and participant roles, the interactive including image size and angling, and finally the compositional that includes visual salience and spatial framing, were tackled. The integration of the linguistic and visual modes contributes to the portrayal of Merida as a female leading character that breaks the stereotypical image of princesses in Disney animated films.

Based on the pragmatic analysis of Merida's linguistic contribution, a number of remarks have been drawn regarding her characterization as a female protagonist. As indicated through qualitative and quantitative analyses of Merida's turns in the dialogue, she performs FTAs (65.7%) more frequently than she performs FSAs (15.7%). She performs numerous FTAs that include refusals, disagreements, criticisms, challenges, complaints and orders which threaten the face wants of other female and male characters that might be of higher social status and power than she does. This contributes to her rendering as a strong, determined and confident woman who refuses to comply with the role of the so called perfect princess and defies rules and conventions to maintain her freedom of action and choice. Such distinct portrayal is further confirmed through the visual mode.

These findings are consistent with findings of previous studies including Whelan (2014), Maity (2014). Merida represents a new heroine whose dialogue with other characters, majorly with her mother, establishes a new definition of "princess" that breaks the stereotype of old submissive and silent princesses who passively do what they are told (Whelan, 2014). She is the kind of princess that raises her voice, complains, refuses to comply and even curses. Generally, Merida's dialogue serves to show how this film breaks the traditional assumptions about femininity as represented by the Disney Princesses. Certainly, no one in the audience is meant to believe that Merida must give up her autonomy because she is a princess despite her young age (Whelan, 2014). Nevertheless, these findings seem contradictory to the findings Benabdellah (2018), Eisenhauer (2017), and Itmeizeh and Ma'ayeh (2017). Unlike their conclusions about female use of mitigation and politeness in animated films, Merida in *Brave* represents a female model that relies heavily on challenging and face-threatening speech acts. Therefore, she is considered a new heroine that defies the stereotype of the passive and polite princess who is submissive to a patriarchal society or a dominant male partner (Itmeizeh & Ma'ayeh, 2017).

Moreover, the analysis of Merida's visual depiction establishes her image as a brave, active, independent and athletic princess. She appears mainly as Actor in several transactional action processes suggesting her activeness and independence. She is also pictured repeatedly through low angling indicating her superiority and powerfulness and through close-ups engaging the viewers closely with her actions and emotional responses which enrich her portrayal as a complex and realistic female figure. Finally, she has visual prominence and compositional value reflecting her nonconformity, heroism and love for mother. Although this model of visual analysis has not been applied for visual analysis to animated films, similar concluding remarks are offered by studies that applied different models of analysis. Tóth's (2017), for instance, concluded that Merida represents an unconventional feminine image that might seem "masculinized" (Tóth, 2017, p.206). Her outstanding skills in horse-riding, archery and sword-fighting portray her as a boy rather than a girl (Tóth, 2017). She is mostly depicted

in active and dangerous physical situations fighting and defeating men and bears which are stereotypically masculine activities.

However, her femininity is sustained so she provides a positive and empowering female model for young viewers. Real feminist empowerment is not solely suggested through violent and risky actions that might seem masculine, but joint masculine-feminine acts that break gender stereotypes of both femininity and masculinity (Tóth, 2017). Thus, girls and women can be brave to climb mountains, be competitive to defeat male rivals, be skilled in using weapons to fight and rescue others. Besides sewing tapestries and nurturing familial bonds. These types of actions are not confined to boys or men, as suggested by this film. In fact, Merida's father, King Fergus seems proud of his daughter on several occasions. In fact, he praises her twice for reaching the peak of the fire falls and for reconciling the misunderstanding among the lords of the clans and preventing war. Such androgynous rendering of the heroine provides young viewers with a balanced and empowering female role model. Merida represents a less gender-role specific than the traditional definitions of femininity (Baker & Raney, 2007). She is constructed as well-rounded protagonist that maintains some key feminine characteristics such as beauty and emotionality besides some unconventional personal and behavioral traits including bravery, independence and powerfulness. Therefore, it is considered to be "a groundbreaking move on the part of Disney/Pixar" (Tóth, p.207).

In fact, both the linguistic and the visual modes perfectly integrate to construct the distinct unconventional character as a heroic princess. While the linguistic mode reveals Merida's personal traits through her choices FTAs and FSAs, visual depiction represents her character through her physical actions and appearance. On this multimodal level, Merida's female identity is constructed as a non-stereotypical protagonist. Throughout the film, Merida breaks the past image of the domestic female figure of Disney, such as Snow White or Cinderella, who cleans and cooks. Even when she sews, to save her mother form the magical spell, she does it in a practical rather than an artistic manner. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Merida is portrayed as an asexual female figure that shows no interest in or readiness for heterosexual marriage. In fact, she defies her mother and social conventions to avoid this kind of relationships. Unlike most of Disney princesses, Merida deviates from the traditional representation of homogenic female heterosexuality.

With Disney Renaissance movies, there were some attempts of development in the representation of female power. Nonetheless, female protagonists have not manifested great progress. Princesses such as Belle in the *Beauty and the Beast*, Pocahontas in *Pocahontas*, and Mulan in *Mulan* among others, have indicated superficial progress (Dundes, 2001; Maity, 2014; Sumera, 2008). These Disney Princesses have presented unrealistic depictions of femininity and womanhood that in turn harm young viewers, particularly girls, and influence their perceptions of themselves negatively (Maity, 2014).In contrast, Merida in Brave offers a realistic female heroine who represents girls' physical potential together with their emotional capacities. Since Disney animations and their popular princesses have shown a powerful influence on children's media and product consumerism, contributing to a new "girlhood" (Maity, 2014), progress that takes place in the representation of these phenomenal protagonists is potentially influential and valuable. Indeed, Merida represents the kind of Princess that the girls should aspire to be like.

Nonetheless, the film still upholds some patriarchal values and gender assumptions that need to be reconsidered. For example, the protagonist sustains the stereotypical physical features of past princesses including body slimness, skin whiteness, and youth beauty. In Disney Princesses animated films, these are established as norms. It seems that the Princess category in Disney productions has excluded any female figure that is not thin, white, young

and beautiful. This in turn reinforces superficial and unrealistic societal values and expectations that affect children's self-value and self esteem. Disney producers will have to do more than introduce diverse Disney Princesses to compensate for fifty years of reinforcing cultural hegemony (Guizerix, 2013). It is part of animation corporations' responsibility to acknowledge the powerful socializing and educational effect they have on children (Giroux, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary for animation writers and producers to provide a healthier children media genre whether linguistically, visually, or otherwise as children acquire gender norms and linguistic productions from the characters whom they watch and admire (Binkley, 2016).

10. Limitations and recommendations

One of the greatest limitations to this study is its limited scope and corpus. The paper has been confined to the scrutiny of the representation of one female figure, namely the female protagonist Merida, in one animated film produced by Disney/Pixar studios. Therefore, findings cannot be generalized. Future studies can expand the scope of analysis to include other female and male major and minor characters. Further research also can examine a wider span of animated films produced by different animation studios revealing their different narrative structures, characterizations, and techniques. In addition, my study relied on specific theoretical models for the linguistic and the visual analysis. I list this as a limitation since I only focus on one linguistic aspect which is the politeness aspect. Future studies might apply other linguistic models to reveal more about the linguistic features of the characters of both genders in animated films. Similarly, regarding the visual approach, my analysis was confined to the application of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) model which has been most pertinent to fixed visual designs. Further research can explore gender visual depictions applying models from the film theory and studies which might deepen understanding of the role of moving pictures in gender representation and socialization. In addition, this study has applied a multimodal analysis of the intersection of the two modes language and image in the construction of gender identity. Other studies might need to investigate the significance of other modes, such as music and color, in character portrayal and gender representation.

11. Conclusion

Between the 1930s and the 1990s, animated female characters were created according to specific stereotypes defined and interpreted in a strict patriarchal hierarchy as innocent, beautiful and submissive. However, big positive steps have been taken to evolve such representations. The production of *Brave* (2012) is indeed a step towards a positive portrayal of women fighting for their rights and choosing their individual path in life (Itmeizeh & Ma'ayeh, 2017). Whelan (2014) predicted that princesses like Merida will come to truly redefine "princess" in the minds of the American public and viewers around the world. Such feminist-friendly animation production, Wilde (2014) pointed out, is the result of the inclusion of female producers and directors working on the animation films industry to guarantee a realistic portrayal of female protagonist as contemporary women. It is fair to suggest, then, that we can expect to see more princesses like Merida in children animation films in the future. So long as there is a market for the ever evolving princess narratives, animation studios, primarily Disney, will continue to produce and sell them (Whelan, 2014). To conclude, this study has triangulated the findings of previous studies underlining the drastic change and remarkable progress attained regarding the portrayal of female roles in children animated films This study has also confirmed the legitimacy of using a multimodal methodology to examine the linguistic and visual aspects of children media artifacts. My hope is that animation film producers will continue to depict positive portrayals of femininities as empowered and independent woman. I also hope this kind of research will proceed and expand to document the progress that takes place and its influence on children.

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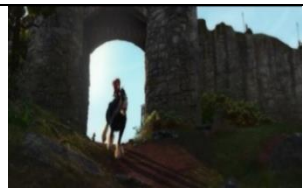Mascelli, J. (1998). *The five C's of cinematography: Motion picture filming techniques*. Los Angeles: SILMAN-JAMES PRESS.
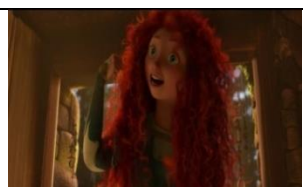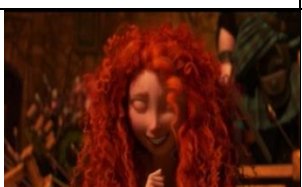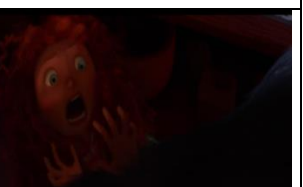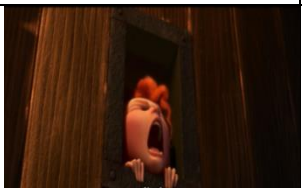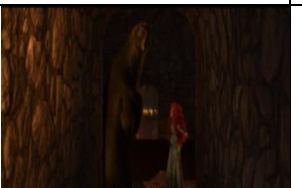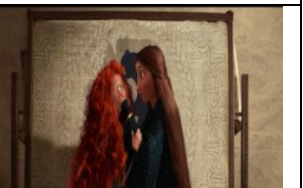
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Visual Appendix- Merida in *Brave*

Processes & Participant roles			
Frame 1- Minute 05:32	**Frame 2- Minute 07:01**	**Frame 3- Minute 08:12**	**Frame 4- Minute 07:41**
Frame 5- Minute 07:32	**Frame 6- Minute12:55**	**Frame 7- Minute 15:16**	**Frame 8- Minute 15:42**
Frame 9- Minute 54:09	**Frame10- Minute 54:35**	**Frame 11-Minute 55:35**	**Frame12-Minute 01:01:25**
Frame 13- Minute 01:11:21	**Frame 14-Minute 01:17:24**	**Frame 15-Minute 01:12:40**	**Frame16- Minute 01:12:55**
Frame 17- Minute 01:18:03	**Frame 18-Minute 01:18:04**	**Frame19- Minute 56:15**	**Frame 20-Minute01:22:16**
Frame 21- Minute 16:46	**Frame 22-Minute 28:20**	**Frame23-Minute 33:12**	**Frame 24-Minute 01:18:10**

Image Size & Angling			
Frame 25- Minute 07:21	**Frame 26-Minute 08:45**	**Frame27-Minute 13:46**	**Frame 28-Minute 16:45**

Frame 29- Minute 24:18	**Frame 30-Minute 24:44**	**Frame31-Minute 26:03**	**Frame 32-Minute 26:13**
Frame 33- Minute 26:24	**Frame 34-Minute 26:25**	**Frame35-Minute 26:35**	**Frame 36-Minute 26:47**
Frame 37- Minute 27:20	**Frame 38-Minute 28:04**	**Frame39-Minute 28:26**	**Frame 40-Minute 28:55**
Frame 41- Minute 33:35	**Frame 42-Minute 01:08:49**	**Frame43-Minute 01:14:54**	**Frame 44-Minute 40:11**

Salience & Framing

Frame 45- Minute 05:53	**Frame 46-Minute 13:50**	**Frame47-Minute 17:02**	**Frame 48-Minute01:04:30**
Frame 49- Minute 07:11	**Frame 50-Minute 01:13:44**	**Frame51-Minute 42:55**	**Frame 52-Minute01:23:21**