

# A Cognitive Linguistic Study of Construal Operations in Selected Strange Trend Silent Animated Films

**Hind Fareed Jaber<sup>1</sup>**

Department of English- College of Education for Women/ University of Baghdad  
[hindfareed22@gmail.com](mailto:hindfareed22@gmail.com)

**Rana H. Al-Bahrani<sup>2</sup>**

Department of English- College of Education for Women/ University of Baghdad  
[prof.rana.albahrani@gmail.com](mailto:prof.rana.albahrani@gmail.com)

## Abstract

The present study is qualitative cognitive linguistic study. It aims to examine the number and type of construal operations highlighted by Croft and Cruise (2004) by the participants when deciphering silent animated animation. To meet the objective of the study, two silent animated films have been selected from Strange Trend YouTube group to be the data of the study. The type of animations selected address social and human issues that might be encountered in any society at any time. The model used in the analysis is Croft and Cruise' Adapted version of Construal Operations. The study has concluded that the majority of the participants unconsciously passed through these stages; however, the number of these stages were sometimes minimized to 2 or three stages. Not all items identified in the first stage have been invested in the rest of the stages. Finally, there is no one to one correspondence between the number of items identified and the ability to access the conceptually connoted meaning of the silent animate under examination. The level of literacy among the participants is good; however, they need to focus more to reach the last stage of the construal operations which focuses on the details.

## Keywords

Animation, Cognitive Linguistics, Construal Operations, Visual Literacy, Visual Language

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## Introduction

The advancement in visual culture has led to experience different versions or forms of communication generated from the main modes, the verbal and visual. Speaking of the visual mode, it can take the form of symbols, images, sculptures, engravings, films, and animations. Such technological development entails or requires visual literacy enhancement on the part of its designers and readers. That is, it involves having the ability to read, decipher, and mentally conceptualize what is pictorially being presented (Wileman, 1993: 114, as cited in Stokes, n.d.). According to Heinich, Molenda, Russell, & Smaldino (1999: 64, as cited in Stokes, n.d.), the term visual literacy entails both understating and creating visual messages. Bamford (2003) adds, as is the case with verbal, visual language requires having analytical and exploring skills, contemplating, criticizing, deducing, and linking. This is because there is no one-to-one correspondence between what is seen with eyes and what is seen in the mind. Another difficulty in visual language is raised by Clarke (2007: 23) who maintains that understanding such a language involves having a sort of "attention balance". It further requires one to connect what is seen in the society, express the viewer's feelings, or viewpoints, reflecting as a result his/her points of interest and focus. Basri (1993) adds that the deciphering of visuals is viewer-centered. The multiple deciphers reflect attention weakness or lack of comprehensiveness on the part of the viewer. According to Barthes (1977), and Cohn (2012), cartoons and caricatures are highly ambiguous visuals. They imply hidden meanings that can only be comically highlighted or tragically exaggerated. They often blur figures and characters' features to make them vague, impossible to be read, and to trigger active and creative thinking. Being symbolic as Rose (2001) points out, visual deciphers have moved from being "transparent windows to the world" to complex modes that require various ways of construes that reflect an interpreter's own schema knowledge. To the researchers of the present work, the difficulty encountered in deciphering visuals will be doubled if they are devoid of scripts or captions as the they will be open to various personal views. This opinion supports This opinion supports Gendron's (2011, as cited in Al-Bahrani, 2018: 815) statement in that the communicative complexity of silence can be attributed to their "multiple functions that are cognitively mapped based on the verbal and non-verbal pragmatic clues". Besides, Al-Bahrani (2018) adds here that silence is a source of multiple and homonymous functions. Ampera, Iskandar, Tabieh, and Soomro. (2021) maintain that visuals highly enhance language knowledge. They further assumed that having a multi-culture group of participants leads to have different interpretations. This is because each participant will reflects his way of thinking,, background knowledge, and culture. Accordingly, the present work aims to examine the availability of the four stages of construal operations on the part of the participants when deciphering visual elements, particularly silent animations. That is, the study aims to answer the following research question, what are the construal operations used by the participants when deciphering visual elements, such as animations? Such a study helps to know about learners' level of visual literacy to be able later to develop and/or enhance it, and cope with the new technological development, the digital and visual spirit of the age. In this context, Shepard and Cooper (1982) say that being visually literate is highly important due to the role visuals play in changing and transforming people's minds. The study further reveals the significance of cognitive linguistics as an approach in flexibly dealing with the different construes highlighted. It focuses on the individual differences as exemplified by their various interpretations, connecting as a result between their highlighted concepts and reality, the essence of cognitive linguistics.

## Theoretical Background

### Animation

Animation has been defined by Thompson as "any form of motion picture that is not a cartoon". It started in 1828 where it was made only from papers and ropes; and was originally intended for children. Besides, the pioneer in this area was Stuart Blackton, whose first animation film was in 1906, titled "Humorous Phases of Funny Faces". Later, the work with animation has been expanded to include "trick films" (as cited in Nowell-Smith, 1996). Ellis (2018) adds, in 1981, two of Disney's greatest animators, Thomas and Johnson (1995) wrote "The Illusion of Life", which is considered the Bible of animations. The book explains the main concepts of animations, shedding light on the best practices which has been adopted traditionally and even in nowadays digital areas. In 1900,



the very popular animator was Walt Disney, whose animated series were named after his name. It was characterized by being highly realistic and deep. To animate means "to make someone or something vibrant or excited, or to make something, such as a drawing move by making a sequence of sketches, images, or other objects and showing them rapidly one after another (Merriam-Webster, 2020). MAIO (2020) further states that animations are made up of "thousands of individual photographed images that are stitched together to give the appearance of movement. Traditionally, animation has been described as the method of photographing a series of individual drawings on successive frames of film in order to produce the illusion of movement". Since the shift has been set on visuals, the world has been referred to as "the world of image" (Bamford, 2003: 7). In this regard, the cultural theorist W.J.T. Mitchell maintains that "the problem of the twenty-first century is the problem of the image" (1995, as cited in Felten, 2008). Besides, Felten (2008) states that the dominance of words and texts over years in the western culture has been over, and replaced by the "pictorial turn". He further added that pictures are no longer seen as entertaining and illustrating tools. They have rather started to be seen as highly significant mode of interaction, commination, and sense-making. For Aristotle (as cited in Stokes, n.d.: 10), "without image, thinking is impossible". This is because as West (1977, as cited in Stokes, n.d.: 10) mentioned that even the "alphabet characters started as pictures of meaning".

## **The concept of construal**

Langacker (2008) maintains that when adopting the cognitive linguistic approach, linguistic meaning is viewed as having two components: "conceptual content" and "a specific way of construing this content". In other words, the word "construal" refers to "our manifest ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways". Hart (2013, as cited in Barczewska, 2017) says that such a mental encoding process is said to have an essential role in meaning construction. Besides, Jensen (2011) adds that when construing a given word, more than one operation might be at work to decode a specific word. Further, the process of construal is based on one's experience and psychology rather than on a fixed and conventional repertoire of meanings. Evan (2007) defines the process of construal as a way of packaging and presenting a concept to trigger in the mind of a hearer a specific understanding.

## **Literature Review**

Various studies have been conducted on the visual literacy and visual language like that of animation, images, caricatures, etc., from different angles. Accordingly, the literature review of the present work will be classified into: general studies about visuals, and specific studies about animations, and as illustrated below: Waad and Al-Bahrani (2020) conducted a study to measure the importance of non-verbal devices in enhancing tourism. A number of persuasive techniques have been adapted from different scholars to analyze (4) recreational images randomly selected from Iraqi Arabic and American English recreational brochures. Results illustrated that the non-verbal techniques highly play a role in affecting tourists' psychology. They further represent the basic elements of the highlighted conceptual images and/or the associative meanings. Besides, when reading images, one has to read them holistically and comprehensively to arouse various emotive senses and to fully understand them. Al-Fatlawi and Al-Bahrani (2019) investigated the "Impact of the Number and Type of Figures on Accessing the Meaning of Caricatures". The aim of the study was to examine the role played by the two variables, number and type of the figures (i.e., items of an image) identified in caricature reading. The study was both quantitative and qualitative in nature; the calculations were made using EXCEL Program whereas the descriptive part was analyzed using Tolman's Theory of MENTAL MAPS (1948). The study was conducted on third-year students, at English Department, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad. Besides, the data selected for the study was (1) social caricature drawn by Iraqi famous caricaturist, Maitham Radhi, addressing a very important issue in the Iraqi society. The found that the percentages of comprehensive thought or understanding are higher than those of the strip method. As a result, the study concluded that the number of figures reported and the type of thought highly affect caricature reading. Besides, the full identification of figures is required; however, what is more important is that one has to know which of these figures need thorough conceptualization. Such knowledge helps succeed in mapping and linking these figures properly

to ultimately access the exact meaning. Azeez and Al-Bahrani (2019) conducted a qualitative study entitled, "A Cognitive Linguistic Study of the Satirical Language in Al-Hajjar's Caricatures. The aim of the study was to examine the way Dheaa Al-Hajjar, an Iraqi popular caricaturist, invests his caricatures in producing satire humorously. Such a process requires creative thinking on the part of both the caricaturist and the readers. Accordingly, (9) caricatures were selected to be analyzed by the researchers using Arthur Koestler's theory of bisociation (1964). The study concluded that Al-Hajjar implemented different figurative types like metaphor, symbolism, etc. which are all considered important cognitive linguistic mechanisms in visual language in general. Besides, visual language is also characterized by the usage of symbolism, which is represented by the use of symbols, icons, or colors, and of gestures as well. Moreover, the study shed light on that ideas Kukkonen's (2011) point in that ideas do not reside in the figures themselves, but are derived from the way these figures are used and linked. Finally, the meaning generated from these caricatures imply either a thought or feeling, or may be both. This conclusion supports the one mentioned by Mahadi and Al-Bahrani (2011) in that an image as a visual means of communication "represents an attractive sign that motivates and arouses feelings of curiosity, challenge, aspiration and interests.... It ...tries to reflect whatever aspect that is difficult to be presented linguistically or that may not be reflected suitably using other modes of communication". In (2017), Al-Bahrani and Al-Azzawi examined the way visual language represents a source of creative cognition. To achieve the objective of the study, they randomly selected a highly symbolic caricature image about early marriage phenomenon in the Iraqi society. Then, the image was distributed to (67) respondents and their answers were analyzed conceptually using Lyons' (1971) concepts of grammatical and expressive meanings. The study concluded that the respondents' level was acceptable, yet it needs to be enhanced. Besides, the limited number of the linguistic signs were processed and linked in a variety of ways, reflecting as a result the respondents' previously stored schema knowledge. Finally, the study proved that denotative signs are the ones that help give ways to highlight connotative meanings. Al-Bahrani, Al-Saadi, and Yousif (2016) conducted a study entitled, "A Detextualized Social Caricature as a Source of Plural Denotations". The aim of the study was to examine the participants' ability to identify the role played by the denotative key-signs in accessing the denotative meaning of the silent caricatures selected or other related or unrelated denotative meanings. To meet the objective, the cognitive semantic model, Domain Analysis by Ronald Langacker (1987) was adopted together with the concept of denotation by Ronald Barthes in his theory entitled *Mythologies* (1957). A number of (5) Iraqi caricatures were randomly selected from Iraqi monthly magazine "Narjes". These caricatures were displayed to (100) participants from the third stage of English Department/ college of Education for Women/University of Baghdad, and their answers were then analyzed. Results showed that (19%) of the participants were able to fully identify the figures of the selected caricatures, and so fully access the exact meaning. The low percentage entails that the participants could not invest the total and right type of the figures displayed, and so they were not able to properly access the exact meaning. Besides, since the caricatures were textless, the participants had the freedom in highlighting different related and/or unrelated interpretations, i.e., textless images are a source of homonymous or polysemous construes. Speaking of the related studies on animations, the researchers have found the following: Wafi (2013) studied the "Impact of an Animated Pictures Program on Fifth Graders in Gaza Learning English Vocabulary". Two groups of students were selected to do the experimental and control group, respectively. The former group received vocabulary instruction through an animated image program, whereas the latter through a traditional method. The study was conducted in 2012-2013 to include all fifth (female) grades in Gaza governorates. Conclusions revealed the following: using animated pictures to teach vocabularies is highly better than adopting the conventional approach. Besides, animations are said to expand a range of possible learning scenarios, activate students' learning experiences, and encourage cooperative learning. Ghaderi and Afshinfar (2014) conducted a study entitled, "Iranian Intermediate EFL Students' Intake and Retention of Idioms: A Comparative Study of the Effects of Animated vs. Static Funny Pictures". The aim of this study was to examine the use of some visual techniques, particularly, funny animations and static images in enhancing the process of teaching idioms. A Solution Placement Test was prepared, and a number of (60) participants were chosen, whose ages ranged between 15-22 years. Results revealed that the proposed strategy is highly effective in improving students' learning of idiom definitions. It helps visually remembering the idioms learned. Mahmood (2017) investigated the role of animations from the Islamic legitimate perspective. The study aims at investigating the positive and negative role of animations on children behavior. Results showed that animations play an

important role in teaching children as they have a great impact on them due to combining both educating and amusing orientations. From the Islamic point of view, there is no utter refusal or acceptance of animations. Religiously speaking, it is stated that any obscene scenes or speeches that do not suit culture and age of children should be banned. Kamalrudin (2020) investigated the use of animation in facilitating the learning of SLA. To meet the objective of the study, naturalistic and child-friendly short-animated films on young English Language Learners were used. An experimental study was done on seventy two Mandarin-speaking participants from Nanjing, China. The participants were all English language learners. Results showed that animation need to be invested in the process of teaching as a supplementary teaching tool. Such a tool can be considered a teaching medium that facilitates the language learning process. As it has been noted so far, though visual languages; especially animations have been studied from various perspectives, however, still studies on animations need much more focus. This is because the majority of the studies has been tackled from the teaching point of view or from a legitimate perspective. Accordingly, the present work has been conducted from a cognitive linguistic point of view to examine the different stages of construal operations adopted when deciphering non-verbal messages to ultimately identify the level of literacy on the part of the participants regarding reading animations.

## Adopted Model

To analyze the data of the study, the researcher adopted Croft and Cruise' model of "construal operations". The mode involves passing through four basic cognitive stages to be able to construe different aspects of experiences. These stages involve: (1) attention/ salience, (2) judgment/ comparison, (3) perspective/ situatedness, and (4) constitution/gestalt. (Barczewska, 2017). Attention/Salience is described by Croft and Cruise (2004) as the first operation that operates in the mind of a hearer. It involves the availability of certain items that help captures the attention and determine the process of deciphering. Krüger (2013) assimilates such a stage with Langacker's notions of specificity, focusing and prominence. The second stage, on the other hand, is Judgment/Comparison. It follows the process of focusing and entails assimilating or comparing things using figurative language or categorization. Such a process is like that of Jacobsen's (1971: 19) psychological processes of being identical, different or belonging to the same category or experience. In this vein, Croft/Cruise (2004) maintain that this operation is based on one's ability to highlight the points of similarity and difference, categorize or group them in a given conceptual category. The third operation is called Perspective/Situatedness. According to Croft and Cruise (as cited in Jensen, 2011), it involves situating a given scene at a given time, place, culture, etc. in the world. This means finding similar cases in the world or among people to clearly realize and conceptualize the scene in question. The fourth and last operation is Constitution/Gestalt; it implies construing an object or a word or a concept based on its "shape, temporal, physical features". The construal can be as a whole unit or as "series of dynamic actions as forming one event" to help structure or conceptualize a gestalt, i.e., a pattern or a configuration of a given concept of scene (Croft & Wood, 2000; as cited in Jensen, 2011: 8).

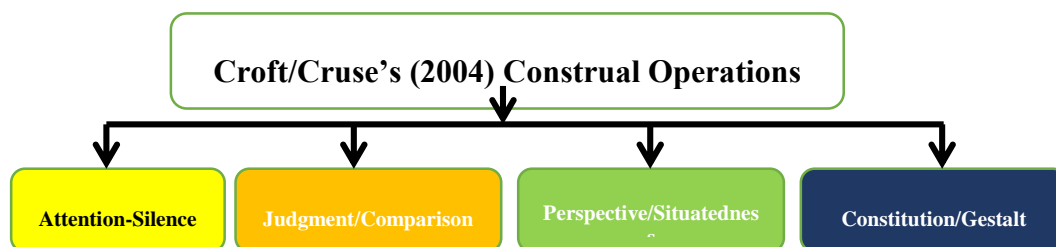


Figure 1. Croft and Cruise' construal operations

## The Analytical Part

### Methodology of the study

The study is qualitative; It adopts the cognitive linguistic approach in data analysis, specifically the theory of Construal Operations as modified by Croft and Cruise (2004). To achieve the objective

of the study, two very short silent animations have been selected. These animations belong to a Chinese group; they are called Strange Trends (hence st.). Such a type of animations is concerned with addressing human and social issues, and depicting real life problems and situations in a very realistic and pathetic way. The number of the participants are fifteen who have been randomly selected following the ethical considerations. The participants are from College of Education for Women-University of Baghdad, particularly from the first stage University level. The animations were displayed via the virtual program FCC, and then a set of questions were highlighted and the participants' answers were recorded using Google form.

## Data sampling

Speaking of the data of the study, they involve the following:-



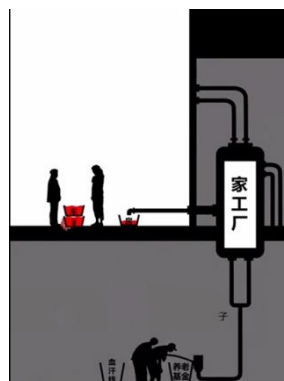
Film 1. John, V. (2019, October13, 3:14-3:47)

### First silent animated film

The story may happen in people's life; marriage, love, or family is a matter of helping, cooperating, doing things together to make the link between the two people strong and sustained, and to keep the love lighted on. The film is about a man and a woman who love one another as indicated by the icon of heart that appears on their chests. Each one of them was standing at the edge of a high ground; each at one side. They are trying to eat from a middle big pot, but they could not because the spoons are long to the extent they cannot reach their mouth. The only solution is to feed one another. The pot is put in the middle and neither of them could step forward, otherwise they will fell down and get hurt by the quills. Once they managed to feed one another, the separated sides of the ground have been bridged and the quills have been changed into plants and flowers and they could be closer and together forever. That is, with love, cooperation and unity, life can go on and become easy and manageable.

### Second silent animated film

The story of this film is young people are usually greedy and selfish. They do not value the things being offered by their parents. Parents are always ready to do anything to keep their sons and daughters happy and safe.



Film 2. STRANGE TREND.  
(2019, October 26, 6:52-7:32)



Here, there are two young people, man and woman who look careless. The young woman does not seem stratified with whatever is done for her sake by the young man. The young man, on the other hand, looks highly obsessed by making anything that make her beloved happy and satisfied. He is ready to give her his soul, his life and whatever precious for him, but she never feels satisfied. To the extent, he does not notice that he is scarifying his parents' efforts for her sake.

## Data Analysis

### Analysis of the first silent animated film

**Table 1.**

Categorizing the participants' answers according to the four construal operations

Particip ants	Attention/ Salience	Judgment/Comparison	Perspective/ Situatenedness	Constitution/ Gestalt
(P1)	Icon of heart thorns	The story is that no matter how difficult it is, we can overcome it with true love and cooperation. The spoon means cooperating, sacrificing, and overcoming problems. The process of feeding means giving one person's love to another, and the love will bear fruit and be renewed within them.	The story is that no matter how difficult it is, we can overcome it with love and cooperation.	true love
(P2)	The process of feeding	The story is that giving is important for humanity and for continuing good work. The goal of this process is that the positive nature of individuals continues to give.	The story is that giving is important for humanity and for continuing good work. The goal of this process is that the positive nature of individuals continues to give.	Giving reflects the positive nature of individuals or good work
(P3)	Icon of heart thorns process of feeding	Love passes all odds. Spoons mean the connection between them, the method that brings both closer, or sharing, which makes it easier for them to reach their goal. When everyone gives love to the other, life begins to blossom with hope.	When everyone gives love to the other, life begins to blossom with hope.	/
(P4)	Man and woman Icon of heart Process of feeding Thorn	The story is that the way between the two persons is very hard, but it is very close. Thus, they tried to cooperate with each other to reach what they want. It also means that love from one side will not succeed because there is no exchange of feelings between them. So, it should be from two sides. The icon of heart means feelings of love. The spoons mean feeding the heart with feelings of love just like the way parents feed their children to grow up to be bigger. Accordingly, their love will get bigger	/	the way between them is very hard, but very close

(P5)	Process of feeding	with more feelings of love, respect, and understanding. Cooperation, understanding and love between the two parties will help in the continuation of communication between them. Loving and being unselfish help provide good and benefits to others	Loving and being unselfish help provide good and benefits to others	/	
Table 1. Continued					
	Participants	Attention/Saliencie	Judgment/Comparison	Perspective/Situatedness	Constitution/Gestalt
(P6)	Man and woman Spoons Process of feeding pot	Man and woman Spoons Process of feeding pot	The story behind this video is giving and trying to reach, heal, or help the one you love even if you are in danger. Preferring the other person over the soul and trying to heal the other person.	trying to reach the one you love even if you are in danger. The way you try to reach the person you love and heal or help him or her.	You are in danger
(P7)	Man and woman Process of feeding Spoons	Man and woman Process of feeding Spoons	The story behind the short video is that we must cooperate in order to benefit the other person, or help and feed the other person. The process of feeding means cooperation between the two parties.	is that we must cooperate in order to benefit the other person.	/
(P8)	Man and woman Pot water Spoons Bridge	Man and woman Pot water Spoons Bridge	The story behind this video is that spacing hearts generate hatred and grow thorns on their way. However, when the hearts converge and meet, they open a new path to happiness. The spoons in this animation are considered a link between these two young men. The process of feeding is a sign of love.	/	spacing hearts, a new path, two young men.
(P9)	Man and woman Process of feeding	Man and woman Process of feeding	To think of oneself does not lead to a success in any relationship or any project. Our thinking of the public is something good, and must be the first. Personal interests destroy any relationship in general.. and any relationship between the two in particular. Feeding others in the video is a metaphor. The main idea includes sharing opinions, understanding interviews, teamwork, and other things	Our thinking of the public is something good, and must be the first.	between the two
(P10)	Man and woman Process of	Man and woman Process of	A person cannot go on alone in this life... With	With cooperation, power, Your way to	/



	feeding	cooperation, power, your way to success will be open. In my opinion, the process of feeding means cooperation	success.	
(P11)	Man and woman Spoons Pot	Mercy and compassion are the most beautiful thing in life. If love enters our hearts, we will live a happy life. The spoon means the things with which love and peace rule. When feeding another one, one will be able to stand in balance and this indicates that we must have compassion amongst us.	our hearts, we will live a happy life. We must have compassion amongst us	/
Table 1. Continued				
Participants	Attention/Saliencie	Judgment/Comparison	Perspective/Situatedness	Constitution/Gestalt
(P12)	Man and woman Thorns process of feeding	An individual cannot live alone. Life is full of hardships. The spoon symbolizes the individual's communication with the rest of society, where communication results in love and then society's prosperity. This action means cooperation and unity against the hardships of life.	An individual cannot live alone. Life is full of hardships. The spoon symbolizes the individual's communication with the rest of society, where communication results in love and then society's prosperity	/
(P13)	Man and woman Spoons Pot of food	Helping each other in difficulties. The spoons are a process of providing assistance to some.	/	/
(P14)	Man and woman Spoons Pot Thorn	By the love, we can do anything and never give up. The icon of love means the hope and the rope of life, which we should stick to it. The process of feeding means we should love and help each other and give up being selfish.	we can do anything and never give up on love and hope. we should stick to it. we should love and help each other and give up being selfish.	/
(P15)	Man and woman Process of feeding Bridge Thorn	The love with which we build everything is like building this bridge, or the growth of these plants. Love can give a beautiful feeling and a wonderful and reassure smile, which ultimately leads to have peace. Spoons are a link between these two lovers.	The love with which we build everything is like building this bridge	Love can give a beautiful feeling and a wonderful and reassure smile. ...two lovers

## Findings and Discussion

Results have shown the following:-

1. 13.33% of the participants were able to identify the least number of item, i.e., 1 only; these include: (P2 & P5); 20% of the participants were able to identify or focus on 2 items; these include the participants: (P1, P9, & P10); 40% of the participants were able to identify 3 items; these include: (P3, P6, P7, P11, P12, & P13); 20% of the participants could focus on 3 items only; these include: (P4, P14, & P15); and 6.66% of the participants could focus on 5 items only.
2. Speaking of the participants who managed to focus on 1 item, one can find that their description was general and marginal. However, the description highlighted by **P5** is better than that of **P2**. This is because P5 regarded the process of feeding item as a main item that implies all the others. That is, the process of feeding is in a causative relation with love. Unless one loves someone, one cannot give something, and that love occurs basically between two persons, normally man and woman. Besides, it is that when love gets bigger, life or communication will continue. That is, the focal point is the process of feeding and the other items mentioned are subsidiary and implied points.
3. Speaking of the participants who managed to focus on two items, one can notice that for **P1**, the salient items are the icons of heart and thorn. That is, the basic element is to have love to be able to "feed", give, cooperate, sacrifice the things one has to ultimately overcome all types of difficulties and live peacefully. Thus, with two elements, the participants could access the rest implicitly. For the participants **9&10**, they identified the same elements, and had the same idea, yet the points of emphasis were different. From the element "man and woman", P9 derived the concept of thinking of oneself or being selfish, whereas the same to P10 connoted to live alone. Of course, these two senses were derived in combination with the process of feeding. This is because, in the film, the process of feeding oneself failed as the spoons were long. This scene highlighted the idea that one cannot live alone; otherwise, life will be complicated. The same scene shifted the attention to the idea that with cooperation life will go on. Thus, the same elements could activate polysemous ideas that all give at the end the connotation implied in this animation.
4. For the participants who managed to see 3 salient items, one can see that **P3** started with the element of love; if one has love, s/he can give and help and so pass difficulties. **P7**, on the other hand, started with man and woman to build the story that people have to cooperate and help one another, but why they have to cooperate; it is not stated. The connotation highlighted was not clear as she focused on feeding and spoons which are metonymic objects; one entails the other. That was why, the story was limited to man and woman have to help one another. **P11** started with man and woman to imply the idea that if a man and woman has love inside, and are able to transfer or give what they have, they can stand in peace. Here, again, since spoons and pot are metonymically related, the connotation heightened was correct but limited. **P12**, managed to summarize the whole story by focusing on three basic elements, man and woman, process of feeding and thorns. She stated that if man and women have love, they can share and help and so live peacefully. The success was due to the fact that she referred to love as being something residing in the man and woman's heart, and to spoon as being part of the feeding process. **P13** was so brief again because she focused on metonymically related items, spoons and pots. She did not come across the result of helping and cooperation, so her highlighted connotation was not comprehensive.
5. As for the participants who grasped 4 salient items, one can see that **P4**, managed to develop the connoted message denotatively. She limited the process of helping between a lover and his beloved and did not make generalization to the story and also to the result of such helping. This is because she did not invest the salient item thorn in her explanation. **P6** again did not managed to highlight a comprehensive connotation, this is because she identified elements which are metonymically related, such as spoons and spoon feeding. She even did not shed light on the consequences of such cooperation. However, she highlighted the sense of helping someone else while being in danger, and this connotation added a flavor to the explanation. Again, with **P14**, the explanation was not comprehensive, as two of the salient items were not invested in highlighting the connotation of the animation.
6. Regarding **P8**, though she identified 5 elements, her explanation was not fully comprehensive, as she did not invest all items identified in a proper way. She linked between the distant hearts and the thorns grown down, highlighting as a result a different sense.
7. With respect to the second stage of construal operations, it was found that not all stages are a must and that is why, not all participants passed through all of them. For instance the second stage, Judgment and comparison is very essential in deciphering the connotative meaning

behind these non-verbal symbols. All participants despite the different degrees of exactness and comprehensibility, (60%) passed through it.

8. Only 66.66% passed through the third stage. This is because not all participants were able to refer to what is seen by situating themselves or what happens in reality in it. **P1**, for instance, referred to herself or her peers when she used the pronoun “we”; **P2**, managed to generalize the act of giving to all humanity, saying that if all humanity give, life will continue; **P3** generalized that act of giving love to others to ultimately have a happy life; **P5** also generalize the lesson provided by the animation, saying that one has to love and be unselfish and help others; **P6** used the pronoun you, as if she was addressing someone, **P7** again used the pronoun “we”, **P9** used “our”, **P10** used “your, **P11** used “our” and “us”, **P12** used “we”, and finally **P15** used “we also”. All the mentioned participants associated what they saw to something that might happen in their reality, which implicitly indicates at any time in their life.

9. Regarding the last stage, which is the constitution/gestalt stage, only few participants were able to provide physical description to the items, whether concrete or abstract ones. For instance, **P1** described love as being true; **P2** described the nature of the cooperative people as being positive and their offered work is good; **P4** stated that the distance between the two person is hard and close at the same time; **P6** conceptualized the way man and woman stand near the edge of something very high, and close to the pot, as being in danger; **P8** conceptualized the hearts being in each side as being spaced, and the person as being young, **P9** referred to the number of these people, whereas **P15** conceptualized the consequences of having love, which are having beautiful feelings, and wonderful smile, and also focused on the number of the people.

## Analysis of the Second Silent Animated Film

**Table 2.**

Categorizing the participants' answers according to the four construal operations

Partici pants	Attention/ Salience	Judgment/ Comparison	Perspective/ Situatedness	Constitution/ Gestalt
(P1)	Woman's head lowering and shaking, the man's act of giving (2)	The video expresses the tender we give to people who never deserve and never recognize it. Me and those around me. He gave her all her energy and true love, psychological energy and patience, and could not give more. These are the inner energy; he is offering their sincere love and feelings.	we give to people..... me and those around me.	true love .... psychological energy and patience. these are the inner energy. offer their sincere love and feelings.
(P2)	Four people Red liquid Bouquet of flowers (3)	The story behind this video is that the person who presented this red liquid that symbolizes love and the bouquet of roses to the girl at the expense of his parents or the people who love him may lose himself and consume his energy at the end. I think those people are lovers or friends. He gave her all the love and giving he possessed in order to please her. The parents give all their love and	/	this red liquid I think they are the parents of this young man ..... positive energy to this young man.



(P3)	Young man and woman A bouquet of flowers Red liquid Tank (4)	positive energy to this young man. The story is that the young man exerts all his effort and energy for his beloved, leaving his family and friends. He gave her all that he possessed and gave his effort and energy to her. Red liquid here symbolizes feelings and love and also to energy.	/	The story is that the young man
(P4)	A group of people Red liquid Sense of ignorance (3)	A very arrogant man or a son who does not feel what people are doing for him. They are making the impossible and he is giving them arrogance. In the other side, the people they serve him should love themselves and do that for themselves. Flowers and the liquid symbolize the feelings of love and respect. They offered him appreciation and respect, but he didn't appreciate that, and he was arrogant.	/	A very arrogant man

Table 2 Continued

Partici pants	Attention/ Saliency	Judgment/ Comparison	Perspective/ Situatenedness	Constitution/ Gestalt
(P5)	man and woman Red liquid Not being enough (3)	It's about appreciating the others' feelings and caring for them instead of being greedy for more and more because at the end, things will turn out against us. The woman represents the people who are greedy and always looking for more, and they care about the material things more than the moral things. The other type which is represented by the old people symbolizes the people who care more about moral than marital things. They know that only the good manners and the kind heart could last	It's about appreciating the others' feelings and caring for them instead of being greedy for more and more because in the end things will turn out against us. They symbolizes the different types of people. The woman represents the people who are greedy ... the other type which was represented as the man symbolizes the people who can more about moral than marital things.	being greedy ... different types of people. The woman represents the people who are greedy and always looking for more, and they care about the material things more than the moral things. .... the people who care more about moral than material things. They know that only the good manners and the kind heart ...heart and his true affection looked simple, but it was the best thing

(P6)	People Red liquid (2)	<p>forever so they cherish it more than anything else. First, he gave her his heart and his true affection. It may looked simple, but it was the best thing he got. However, she wanted more, so he put all his blood, sweat and tears and what he had, and gave it to her, so that she could accept him. Red liquid might represent all what he got, his attention, his money, wealth, youth or health</p> <p>The story of this video talks about greed and selfishness. Always there are people who provide us with support and assistance in life. The people in the video are embodiments of repeated cases in our societies that attribute success to them only. This person gave her loyalty and blind obedience, even at the expense of those who support him. The red liquid represents the tender, love and money that parents give their children. They are many people who are like them in our lives, who are better to be called the invisible hands that give us success on a plate of gold. Providing them with endless gifts of material and moral support.</p>	<p>The story of this video talks about greed and selfishness. Always there are people who provide us with support and assistance in life. The people in the video are embodiments of repeated cases in our societies that attribute success to them only. They are many people who are like them in our lives, who are better to be called the invisible hands that give us success on a plate of gold.</p>	<p>This person gave her ... blind obedience, The red liquid .... the invisible hands ... endless gifts of material and moral support.</p>
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Table 2. Continued

Participants	Attention/ Saliency	Judgment/ Comparison	Perspective/ Situatdness	Constitution/ Gestalt
(P7)	Three men and a woman Bouquet of flowers Red liquid (3)	<p>The story in this video is about a man who loved a girl and gave her roses, but she was not satisfied, and he gave her from the blood and fatigue of his family in order to satisfy her. The people of the man, his family, sacrifice their property, which is their blood to make their child happy.</p>	/	she was not satisfied,

(P8)	Man and a girl Red liquid (2)	parents are working so hard to make their children happy. I think the guy and the girl above love each other, and the old man and his wife down are the parents of the guy above. Red liquid represents interest, taste and love, attention, and tiredness. Parents are willing to sacrifice their blood for their children.	Parents are working so hard to make their children happy. parents are willing to sacrifice their blood for their children.	Parents are working so hard .... and the old man and his wife down are.... Red liquid
(P9)	Two people above Red liquid (2)	The giving is free of charge from the parents for their children. A family consisting of a father, mother and son with a person who entered their lives. Giving her all the feelings or material things he possesses for free, including love, compassion, attention	The giving is free of charge from the parents for their children.	The giving is free of charge Giving .... or material things
(P10)	Red liquid Act of giving (2)	Older persons, or parents' sacrifice to their children or adolescents. The whole story implies the continuity in life. Red liquid here symbolizes life. Here, parents are providing their sons with energy and vitality.	Older persons, or parents' sacrifice to their children or adolescents. The whole story implies the continuity in life.	Adolescents and older persons.
(P11)	Man and women above People down (2)	The story urges not to be troubled by others. The people above are a man and a woman. First, he gave her a bouquet of flowers and second, he gave her the blood of other people, who are two people. They provide blood or fatigue to others.	The story urges not to be troubled by others.	The people above are a man and a woman. ...who are two people who give their blood.
Table 2 Continued	Participations (P12)	Judgment/ Comparison	Perspective/ Situatedness	Constitution/ Gestalt
	Person and a girl Red liquid Banquet of flowers (3)	Attention/ Salience	It may be a realistic story	.... They are two boys and a girl. The boy would like to present a nice thing to
		It may be a realistic story that tells about a person who wanted to give something to the girl he loves, but she did not appreciate this thing and refused the gift. They are two boys and a girl. The boy would like to present a nice thing to his girl, and this is because he loves and appreciates her, but she refused. The red liquid symbolizes the true feelings of love that the boy had towards the girl. They are the same people who taught the boy how to love	It may be a realistic story	.... They are two boys and a girl. The boy would like to present a nice thing to



(P13)	Man and a girl Two persons Bouquet of flowers Tank Red liquid (5)	and give all their love and sacrifice. Give your love and your feelings to the one who deserves it. They are two examples to show how the parents sacrifice for their kids to be happy. He gave her a flower, but she didn't take, so he gave her feelings of love, money, everything he had. The parents presented love and attention, everything they have to the boy, their son, to become happy without caring what will happen.	Give your love and your feelings to one how deserve it. They are two examples to show how the parents sacrifice for their kids to being happy.	Give your love and your feelings to one ... They are two examples
(P14)	Old people's act of giving (1)	I saw the sacrifice of the parents for the children. I see a family trying to help each other. Here, the red liquid symbolizes the secret of life that the parents provide him with.	I saw the sacrifice of the parents for the children.	Red liquid
(P15)	Three men and a woman Bouquet of flowers Red liquid (3)	Family sacrifices for the sake of their reckless children. The man above is with his beloved .The men under may be his family. He give her flower and she refused and then gave her power of his family. May be the power of his family, who provide him with money or power.	Family sacrifices for the sake of reckless children.	reckless children. The man above, I think he with his beloved. The men under.

## Results and Discussion

Results have shown the following:-

1. It has been noticed that **P14** managed to focus on one item in the animation in question, which is the old people's act of giving. Based on this item, the participant could conceptualize the sense of sacrifice parents do for the sake of their children and she could not develop any other story.
2. 40% of the participants, P1, P6, P8, P9, P10, and P11 could focus on only two items; however, they varied in highlighting their conceptual stories. For instance, **P1** focused on the way the young man is offering things to her beloved and she is refusing. **P6** focused on the people and the red liquid and could develop her conceptual meaning by linking between what the young man is doing for the young lady to satisfy her at the expense of his parents. **P8** focused on man and the girl, and the red liquid and could also generalize a somehow a comprehensive story. She did not mention all the people in her first identification; however, she referred to them metonymically as being the parents of those young man. She referred to the act of giving by parents to their children, but said nothing about the act of offering done on the part of the young and the act of refusal done by the young woman. **P9** was also limited by focusing only on the generosity of the parents to their children and anyone enters their life. **P10** focused on the act of giving experienced by the parents or old people to their children or young people and on the red liquid. However, she discarded the act of giving done by the young man to the young lady. **P11** focused on the

people up and down, and she metonymically referred to the things offered by the young man and old people.

**3.** Speaking of the participants who focused on 3 items, they represent again (40%), including the following: P2, P4, P5, P7, P12, & P15. **P2** managed to highlighted a comprehensive story by focusing on three basic elements: four people, red liquid and the bouquet of flowers. She highlighted the story that the son who scatters his parents' fatigue and energy to satisfy his greedy beloved will lose himself and destroy his family as well. **P4** in comparison to P2 was successful in focusing on the three following items: a group of people, red liquid and the sense of ignorance. It was expected from her as readers to link between what the young man is offering and the sense of negligence on the part of the young lady. However, it was noticed that the sense of negligence was limited to the son's negligence of his parents sacrifice. Accordingly, the meaning highlighted again was not comprehensive. **P5** referred to the old people as being the parents of the young being displayed; however, she did not link between what they are doing to their sons and what their sons are doing to them. Thus, again her highlighted conceptual meaning was still limited. **P7** saw the two people down as two men not as parents through later in her analysis she corrected her conceptualization. However, the sense of dissatisfaction she referred to was only limited to the young lady not also to the young man with respect to his parents. **P12** again focused on the young people but referred to the old as being part of them. She also focused on the red liquid and bouquet of flowers and metonymically linked between what is given and rejected. However, the sense of negligence was also limited to the young lady. **P15** managed to give a somehow comprehensive story though the act of negligence done by the young man to their parents was discarded. Here, one can see that the participant failed to recognize that the people down are an old man and woman though later she referred to them as being the parents of the young man.

**4.** **P3** was the only participant who managed to focus from the very beginning on 4 items: young man and woman, a bouquet of flowers, red liquid, and the tank. However, she also neglected the sense of negligence done by the young lady. She identified the tank but did not invest it in her analysis.

**5.** **P13** was the only one who managed to focus on 5 items from the very beginning; these include: man and girl, two persons, bouquet of flowers, tank, and red liquid. However, the sense of negligence on the part of the son to his parents again was discarded.

**6.** Speaking of the second stage of judgment/comparison, one can find that despite the fact that (60%) of the participants managed to situate the story and relate it to something that might happen in any society. For instance, **P1**'s highlighted meaning is limited the act of giving and rejecting y the young man and woman in the animation, she could generalize that to include the sense of serving people who do not deserve. **P5** could generalize the story to mean greedy people who thinks only of material things and good people who care about moral things. **P6** could also generalize her highlighted story to what parents provide their children with in reality and how children scatter what they offer. **P8** managed to extend the story to all parents who are doing hard to satisfy their children to make them happy in their life. **P9** could also generalize her highlighted story to be applicable to parents in general. **P10** also applied what was seen to parents or old people do to their children or young people in general. **P11** generalized the story of not to be troubled or upset by others, referring to what the young man is doing for his dissatisfied lady. **P12** situated what is seen as something happens in reality. **P13** generalized her story to all parents and their children.

**7.** As for the fourth stage, constitution/ gestalt, on can notice that all participants managed to provide-albeit to some items-physical and exact description to the items of the animation in question as indicated in Table 2.

## Conclusions

Answering the following research question started earlier, which reads: what are the construal operations used by the participants when deciphering visual elements, such as animations?, the researchers have found the following:

**1.** The four stages suggested by Croft and Cruise in 2004, were also adopted unconsciously by the participants. However, it has been noticed, these stages were not available with each participant. Some minimalized them to include only 2 or 3 of them.

**2.** Not all items identified at the first stage were exactly or fully included in the analysis. Some participants identified 2, but in the analysis referred to more than this, or vice versa.

3. There is no one to one corresponding between the number of identified items and the ability to access the exact connotative meaning behind the set animation. Some identified 5 items, yet they failed to be meticulous in describing and conceptualizing the message behind the animation under question. Others, on the other hand, could identify 1, 2 or 3, yet could access the conceptual meaning. The reason behind accessing the meaning generally or than that with few number of identified items is that some participants referred to the rest of the items metonymically as being part of the ones identified. Another reason is that some items represent basic ones, whereas others are not.
4. The differences in the starting points reflect the individual differences among participants with reference to their points of emphasis and interest, their ability to recall and connect among the things being displayed.
5. Even the participant who passed through the four construal stages were not able to given in details all the things displayed in the animation. They highlighted things and discarded others, reflecting as a result their understanding, the way they conceptualize things, and the points of interest, etc.
6. It has been also concluded that the participants are somehow visually literate; however, they visual literacy needs to be developed to be able to pass through the whole stages and provide details. Being able to analyze critically reflects having a level of visual literacy as maintained by Heinich, Molenda, Russell, & Smaldino (1999: 64, as cited in Stokes, n.d.), and Bamford (2003).
7. The non-meticulous or non-comprehensive explanations highlighted by the participants reflect the sense of lacking "attention balance" as raised by Clarke (2007, p.23). This attributes to the various deciphering highlighted and to the participants' way of construal visual materials by highlighting things and discarding others. The absence of this mechanism, attention-balance was the reason that made some of the participants unable to connect between what they see and what happens in their society.
8. The somehow different divergence in deciphering silent animations reflect the idea that was highlighted by Al-Bahrani (2018) in that silent messages or language is a source of homonymous messages or meanings. In addition, these differences reflect, as Al-Bahrani and Al-Azzawi (2017) mentioned, the participants' different schema knowledge. Besides, to be able to arrive at the exact meaning, it is recommended as Waad and Al-Bahrani (2020) maintained that visual language needs to be read holistically. Moreover, one should also know as Al-Fatlawi and Al-Bahrani (2019) stated which of these items of visual language requires thorough conceptualization.
9. Being unable to link between the visual mode and reality attributes Rose's (2001) statement in that visual materials have moved from being "transparent windows to the world" to complex modes".
10. The various starting points and particular details highlighted by the participants reflect their points of interest and emphasis. That is why, the construes are, as stated by Basri (1993), viewer-centered, and lack comprehensiveness on the part of the viewer.
11. Though the participants are all Iraqis and are students at the same department, being at the same level and age, yet we could still find differences in their points highlighted and emphasized. This conclusion is against Ampera, Iskandar, Tabieh and Soomro (2021) who maintained that having participants from different cultures entail having differences in understanding.

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