

Identity Thoughts and Trauma in I Am Thinking of Ending Things Movie

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Film, Discourse Analysis, Psychology and Identity

Received : 4, July

Revised : 26, July

Accepted: 27, August

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ABSTRACT

This study applies Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* (2020) to examine the interplay between identity, thought, and trauma. Through textual analysis, the film's fragmented dialogues, monologues, and temporal shifts are shown to mirror the protagonist's unstable sense of self and intrusive reflections on relationships and mortality. Discourse practice highlights trauma as both an isolating and shared experience that challenges viewers' perceptions of reality, while sociocultural analysis situates the film within broader cultural discourses on gender, relational norms, and mental health. Findings suggest that language in the film—through silences, hesitations, and ambiguities—serves as a marker of trauma and identity crisis, with narrative disruptions functioning as discursive struggles over meaning and authority.

INTRODUCTION

In order to communicate and engage with one another, humans always employ language, both in writing and when speaking. Language, according to Hoed (2014, 47), is a system of sound communication that uses sound symbols with meanings that are either agreed upon or chosen at random. Astri et al. (2021) states that language is a tool with an arbitrary character that people frequently use for communication, for getting to know one another, and for interaction. Conversations, storytelling, discussions, radio or television broadcasts, songs, and other forms of speech are all examples of spoken language. Letters, books, journals, articles, comics, newspapers, magazines, novels, and other written forms of speech are examples of written language.

Film is a work that can be used as a data corpus in language research. As a cultural and literary product, it is necessary to please people. . It is believed that films, as artistic creations, can both humorously reveal important issues and play with the audience's emotions. There are numerous media possibilities, including film, for using moving pictures to communicate ideas. Filmmaking is finished when there is a narrative with a message to share with the audiences. Movies employ images, movement, color, and music to express their messages. To to Prasetya (2019), films contain all that casual viewers who are only watching for entertainment need to know in order to easily comprehend the proposals made in the film. Movies can be seen as an audio-visual medium for communicating with a gathering of people in one location to spread a message. Since films are audio-visual mediums that convey a lot of information in a brief amount of time, they are also regarded as effective mass communication tools for audience. As noted by Baran (2012, 231), watching a movie gives the impression that its audience can travel through time and space, telling stories and even influencing them. Most people in society are interested in film, which is an audio-visual mass communication product.

There are several advantages to film. In the words of Trianton (2013), there are several advantages of watching movies, including its ability to serve as a source of information, amusement, education, and a mirror of the country's societal ideals. We can use these four advantages as a point of reference, since movies teach numerous life lessons besides to being entertaining. Movie is an art form that may evoke emotions and be used as a propaganda tool and mass communication tool. This is due to the fact that films often present the spectator with a new world based on all or part of societal stories. As stated by Sulaeman and Goziah. (2019), reality is something that appears or that is a fact. Its meaning, though, goes beyond simply being something that needs to be acknowledged, understood, and even believed. Real-life as social phenomena are shown in films as a kind of representation.

In This research, the researchers would like to research *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* movie. *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* is a surrealist psychological thriller that Charlie Kaufman wrote and directed in the United States in 2020. The adaption is based on Iain Reid's 2016 book of the same name. A young woman named Jessie Buckley is the focus of the story. She and her boyfriend, Jesse Plemons, travel to meet his parents, Toni Collette and David Thewlis. The

primary plot of the movie is interrupted by shots of Guy Boyd, a school caretaker, leaving for work. By the third act, the two storylines had been put This research aim to find the hidden meaning in the movie's dialogue, by using critical discourse analysis.

As mass media, movies are also often playing a role in discourse. Formal linguistic discourse analysis, according to Hodgeset al. (2008, 336), is the study of organised texts in order to find general principles that underpin their linguistic or communicative function. Therefore, the discourse expressed in movie's dialogue is comparable to the discourse that is passed down orally or in writing. Song lyrics analysis correlates to lexicon. A variety of ideas are shown in the media. The media can be used by the ruling class to spread their ideology, gain credibility, and control over public debate. The process of explaining a text as social reality that will be or is being researched by an individual or dominant group that has a propensity to have a specific purpose to accomplish what one wants is known as critical discourse analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers intended to use Critical Discourse Analysis, or CDA, to analyze the text. Hibtiyah (2022, 33) cites Eriyanto as describing CDA as a linguistic research that is closely related to context. The quote mentioned previously illustrates how language can be utilized flexibly for certain reasons. In order to better understand a subject, critical discourse analysis is a method for revealing hidden meaning. Understanding language in use is the main goal of critical discourse analysis since language is more than just a tool for communication. As stated by Zaimar (2014, 24), critical discourse can be used to language, literature, and many other scientific subjects.

Discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis are both associated with discourse type. The purpose of discourse analysis is to pinpoint precise meanings and intentions. In the words of D. Maingueneau in Zaimar and Harahap (2019, 42), speech is made up of multiple phrases, a single word, and a sentence. Discourse may additionally be employed as a spoken word phrase because it is a combination of spoken and written language. Discourse can therefore include a single word, sentence, paragraph, article, book, or even a single scientific topic. To gain a full analysis, CDA is theoretically accountable for bridging the gap between text, discourse, and social practice.

By using the methodologies of linguistics, interpretive traditions, and sociology, Fairclough theorizes the idea of discourse. As it turned out, Fairclough provided a discourse model that encompasses the text dimension, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice – the three dimensions of discourse analysis. According to Eriyanto (2017, 27), the text's microstructural dimensions are analysed linguistically, specifically in terms of vocabulary, semantics, and syntax. The process of producing and consuming texts is connected to discourse practice as mesostructural. One aspect pertaining to the context outside of the text is sociocultural practice as macrostructural.

Critical discourse research is the social interactions research that incorporate linguistic critical analysis and cultural aspects. Critical discourse notions, according to Fairclough (2017, 22), allude to more significant symptoms

such as dominance, racism, sexism, power, and disparity between classes. Every structure has a dominant discursive ideological formation, which includes modes of speaking and seeing and is referred to as an ideological-discursive formation by Fairclough. That's the second component. Language is a microstructure, while activities are macrostructures that create and impact. A text's critical purpose is the last component in the meaning-construction process that this micro also has a dialectical relationship with. This deficiency is directly impacted by critical thinking. In actuality, the kind of social irregularity that Fairclough views as the source and focal point of CDA implies the influence of critical thinking. Its coherence, cohesion, semantics, sentence structure, and vocabulary usage as stated by Fairclough (2015, 53) are all examined linguistically.

METHODOLOGY

This research would like to use a descriptive qualitative techniques by focussing on description, meaning, and a thorough comprehension of the event under examination. Qualitative research, according to Sugiyono (2019), is a methodology grounded on post positivism that seeks to comprehend issues or phenomena that arise in natural environments. By using methods from literature studies, researchers gather data. A thorough review of several reference materials pertinent to the research subject is done in order to undertake this literature analysis. The process of gathering data on a research topic involves a number of tasks, including reading, writing, evaluating, and choosing research sources.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Text

The Charlie Kaufman directed and scripted movie *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* is a sophisticated discourse lab that contains a language structure brimming with existentialist, philosophical, and psychic material. By using language as the primary means of communication as well as of deviation and dissonance of reality, the movie analyses the interior state of humanity, which is characterised by feelings of alienation, anxiety, and despair. In a movie titled "*I'm Thinking of Ending Things*" is a surrealist psychological thriller that Charlie Kaufman wrote and directed in the United States in 2020. The adaption is based on Iain Reid's 2016 book of the same name. A young woman named Jessie Buckley is the focus of the story. She and her boyfriend, Jesse Plemons, travel to meet his parents, Toni Collette and David Thewlis. The primary plot of the movie is interrupted by shots of Guy Boyd, a school caretaker, leaving for work.

The instability of signifiers in the conversation is one of the film's textual unusual behaviors. A fluid discourse structure that cannot be bound to one reality is demonstrated by the main female character, who is never given a specific name in the movie and constantly changes her identity, career, and background. In one passage, for instance, she is called a poet, and in another, a painter, and finally a student of quantum physics. Linguistically, fluctuating deixis and metaphorical exchanges that take the place of literal sentences are used to indicate this instability.

Table 1. Text Dimension Analysis

No	DIALOGUE	
1	Olivia:	. Repeatedly, this sentence plays as an unclear and psychological symbol. The rhetorical form is open and there is no specific answer.
2	Jake: It's always good to remind yourself that the world is larger than the inside of your own head.	Combining universal claims with introspective meaning, the sentence exhibits reflective awareness and a nuanced imperative structure.
3	Olivia: Other animals live in the present. Humans cannot. So they invented hope.	By using a brief declarative construction, this sentence highlights the temporal alienation of humans by presenting a binary opposition between human and animal nature. Hope is used as a language construct to transcend the inability to be present in the moment.
4	Jake: People think of themselves as points moving through time	Though it textually implies latent individualism and the observation of fragmented social awareness, the phrase "People think of themselves" has a generic and abstract structure that allows for the possibility of collective reflection.
5	What if this thought wasn't conceived by me, but planted in my mind, pre-developed.	A sense of doubt, uncertainty, and even mild paranoia are quickly evoked by the above sentence's use of the rhetorical question form, "What if..."

With regard to the chart above, the statement It's always important to remind yourself that the world is bigger than the interior of your own head in the film I'm Thinking of Ending Things has textual power, because it reflects the character's cognitive and existential conflicts. This sentence has a normative but also subjective impact because it is syntactically in the form of a declarative with

the modality always good. Delivered in a gentle and reflective tone rather than with authority, the phrase to remind yourself serves as a covert imperative, namely an encouragement to engage in self-reflection. This represents the character's linguistic approach, which oscillates between an endeavor to uphold reality and self-persuasion. The choosing of the words the symbolic conflict between the internal and external worlds is expanded by the statement, The world is larger than the inside of your own head. In this context, the universe becomes a metaphor of a more expansive, dynamic, objective reality outside the realm of subjectivity, while the head stands for the cognitive, psychological, or even neurotic area. The ontological gap the main character experiences that is, the incapacity to discern between what is genuinely real and what is created by anxiety and personal perception is symbolized by this division between human's mind and the reality.

The application of the expression It's always beneficial to remind yourself that this is a favorable evaluation and that it's advisory, with the methodology consistently highlighting universality. By comparing the grandeur of reality outside of oneself to the limitations of the human intellect, the statement the world is larger than the inside of your own head employs a metaphor. The metaphorical statement "the world is larger than the inside of your own head distinguishes the head as a representation of the internal thinking space and the world as a representation of the outside world. According to this, people are often constrained by their own perceptions and must venture outside in order to observe things from a wider angle. Despite being a complex statement with the main clause, the sentence structure is very straightforward. The object clause and yourself should continually be reminded that the world is bigger than your own thoughts. As though dealing with the reader or listener directly, this exhibits a persuasive yet approachable language style.

Other animals highlight the basic differences between humans and animals, demonstrating their resistance. Animals are positioned as beings confined to the now, without any conceptualization of the past or future, by the unclear propositional form of the term Live in the present. The statement Humans cannot is a categorical claim of absolute modality, emphasizing humans' inability to completely dwell in the present moment. The final line, Invented hope, highlights how humans are creatively generating meaning or mental skills to help them cope with the uncertainty of the future by using the word invented. Rather than being only a natural emotion, the term Invented hope is a metaphor that frames hope as a technological innovation or artificial tool. It points out attention to the human cultural tactic of hope. The conjunction So creates cohesion by connecting cause and consequence, which explains why people created hope. The core idea that humans and animals are different and that this difference is what creates the need for hope is so obvious that coherence.

Discourse Dimension

I'm Thinking of Ending Things is about a young woman named Lucy, sometimes Lucia, sometimes Louisa, and her lover Jake, whose names are never repeated consistently. He extends an invitation for her to come back to his

parents' home in a far-off village. An underlying theme in the story is the woman's internal conflict as she keeps thinking, I'm thinking of ending things. More specifically, a discourse approach to highlight a sense of being confined is demonstrated by the use of repetitious phrase in both dialogue and monologue. Phrases like: It's cold, everything is dying, and I'm thinking of ending things are repeated frequently and convey both a sense of hopelessness and traumatic recurrent incidents. The repetition is a component of a textual pattern that, explains Fairclough, serves to reinforce the meaning's structure, establish ideology, and create a framework for the speakers emotional. Repetition highlights narrative captivity and mental pain in this movie. In order to demonstrate the protagonist's inability to plan for the future, the listener is pulled into a linguistic spiral that makes them feel uneasy, anxious, and even confused. This is a very powerful discourse impact, like the table below:

Table 2. Discourse Practice

Aspect	Description
Genre	The dramatic arts, existential horror, and psychological thriller are blended, disrupting conventional genre expectations in the streaming era and sparking new discussions on <i>arthouse movies</i> .
Text Production	Adapted from Iain Reid's novel, the film was written and directed by Charlie Kaufman, who transforms the psychological narrative into a symbolic, metaphor-rich, and repetitive visual form.
Text Consumption	Audiences interpret the film through personal experience after streaming, leading to critical conversations on existentialism, identity, and remorse, often discussed in online communities like Reddit and Letterboxd.
Text Transformation	The novel's story shifts from a word-based to an audiovisual medium, altering meanings and broadening interpretive possibilities for viewers.

Based on the table, in text production, Charlie Kaufman is the director and screenwriter for the adaptation of Iain Reid's 2016 book. Kaufman shifts the

narrative from a literary, mostly internal monologue, to a visual and audio form. He does this by incorporating his distinctive surrealism, psychologically nuanced style and adding unique scenes (such as the dancing scene) that aren't in the book. Heavy symbolism, nonlinear temporal patterns, and narrative ambiguity are some of the literary choices influenced by this authorial intervention. A message of nonverbal discourse is conveyed by the house's dilapidated layout, lengthy hallways, and low lighting. Text, according to Fairclough, can take many forms, including images, symbols, atmospheres, and other relevant semiotic combinations.

In this movie, the mansion serves as a psychic metaphor, mirroring Jake's tumultuous, painful, and denial-ridden past. The story concerning identity disorientation is thus aided by visual discourse, demonstrating that discursivity is not just expressed but also demonstrated. The movie's use of time creates a distinct arena of discourse. A discourse on death and emptiness is produced by the forward-backward flow, asynchronous pieces, and the enduringly prominent winter symbols. Snow, abandoned roads, and vintage cars slicing through ice storms are all used to highlight the subtleties of complete solitude. Fairclough emphasises that discourse is embodied in a social context and does not exist in a vacuum. This is set against the backdrop of contemporary society's loneliness, where people are mired in monotony, chilly relationships, and a crisis of purpose. By depicting winter, this movie turns into a discussion about psychological decadence and the breakdown of relationships with others.

On a larger scale, *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* symbolises both people's inability to communicate with one another and their inability to accept who they are. Reflecting a postmodern world where identity fragmentation is prevalent, this is a particularly modern discursive theme. The reality is constructed from false narratives that we repeatedly tell ourselves, relationships are transactional, and memories become distorted. In critical discourse, in such a scenario, discourse serves as a vehicle for communication as well as a site of ideological struggle, with competing discourses vying for control of one's own definition, that of others, and that of the world. This process is bitterly reflected in the movie, as the male character uses a fictitious woman as her psychological savior since he cannot face realities. Emotional politicization is also prevalent in the character interaction dimension. It is frequently seen that Jake is nervous, insecure, and terrified of being left behind. As a kind of narrative power claim, his protective language frequently interrupts Lucy's conversation. By saying the girl is mine symbolically by dominating the flow of the conversation. Men sustain relationships through a sense of ownership, even if it is only in their minds, which is a reflection of the gender discourse. Lucy never has complete control over the direction of the talk, let alone her life.

I'm Thinking of Ending Things also defies the rules of cinematic storytelling by combining identity, time, geography, and psychology into a single discursive flow. The language used is deep, intellectual, and frequently tortuous, resembling how individuals talk to themselves. A discursive technique to mimic storytelling, the convoluted narrative structure is not a storytelling breakdown. Kaufman purposefully interrupts the linear flow to expose the power dynamics

in a broken mind, supporting Fairclough's claim that literary form is a reflection of social and psychological systems. The movie is so full of discourse because of this that it can even be examined in layers from the viewpoints of language, culture, gender, and psychology.

Social Practice

A modern humanity constantly normalizes loneliness, anxiety, and alienation, as the movie illustrates. The protagonist struggles to develop a solid sense of self and feels identity fragmentation as a result of cultural pressure to constantly live up to expectations (e.g., must be successful, have a spouse, be educated) The cultural capitalist system that requires performativity and minimises people to merely social roles is the source of this social practice. The dialogue around mental health in modern culture is also reflected in the movie. In *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*, trauma encompasses both individual and social trauma, as evidenced by the way society ignores psychological stigma, dysfunctional families, and gender power dynamics, like a father who denigrate mothers and women who demand children. It corroborates a societal system that still lacks empathy for psychological injuries.

Fairclough believes that the formation of meaning is never neutral and is always linked to power dynamics. The identity of women as lovers of male characters emphasises the patriarchal system that continues to dominate popular cultural discourse, in which women are frequently reduced to supports or male existence reflection Indeed, an implicit critique of the way women is produced through the prism of male desire and fantasy alone is revealed in the film's narrative twist, where the female character is shown to be a projection of the male mind. Women's status is as the other. This is an existence that depends on masculine narratives for meaning is a manifestation of patriarchal social practices. Fairclough's point of view promotes the idea that this type of female power structure is created and perpetuated through cultural discourse, including movies, rather than emerging overnight.

In this film, identity is never presented as stable, but rather as something that changes depending on the narrative perspective. Social norms that need identity to be whole, dependable, and responsible are challenged by this. A person is expected to have a tidy self-narrative in the context of contemporary culture, including information about their identity, background, and goals. However, in psychological reality, particularly during times of trauma and alienation, identity can become disjointed, disorganised, and occasionally even completely erased. While identity is frequently not that straightforward at the level of actual experience, this movie demonstrates how identity is a product of social discourse that is imposed in order for people to be categorized in the social system (family, workplace, spouse). As fluid identity is seen as a threat to the stability of the social order, Fairclough emphasizes that social behaviors require stable identification. Since *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* affirms that people have the freedom to be inconsistent, incomplete, and meaningful despite not fitting into the prevailing cultural category, it serves as a sort of symbolic resistance to the hegemony of a single identity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I'm Thinking of Ending Things is a film that represents discourses of identity, thinking, and trauma through a complicated link between social structures, discursive practices, and socio-cultural practices, according to research employing Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis technique. From a textual perspective, the seemingly rich and random conversation is essentially a fabrication of a person's inner monologue mired in social pressure and trauma. The dialogue between Jake and his lover reveals this, as Jake struggles to navigate his identity in the face of patriarchal cultural norms, familial expectations, and unattainable romantic aspirations. Through the interplay of text, discursive practices, and social practices, this research indicates that the movie *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* depicts a complicated process of discourse on identity, mind, and trauma. In the context of textual analysis, the film's storyline illustrates the psychological turmoil of a male character who experiences recurrent trauma as a result of not living up to social and familial expectations. A fractured mental structure and brittle identity are reflected in the complex, non-linear expressions of speech and language.

The social construction of mental health, which is still fraught with stigma, is inextricably linked to the protagonist's ongoing suffering. Even to the extent of blurring the distinction between his own thoughts and other people's life stories, the main character appears to suppress all of his inner pain and is unable to communicate his fear or wish to distance himself. The psychological wounds must be concealed because mental health is viewed as a shame and should not be discussed. People will become isolated and silent when society expects them to look flawless and sees mental illness as a sign of moral weakness. Discursive hegemony, as stated by Fairclough, is the cause of this type of social practice, in which there is insufficient room in public discourse for the expression of pain outside of the parameters of normalcy. The conflict between the human urge to have one's suffering recognised and the social norm that requires everyone to maintain a positive appearance is therefore beautifully and tragically revealed in this film.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This advanced research employs Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to examine *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* (2020) as a cinematic discourse on identity, thought, and trauma, highlighting how textual, discursive, and socio-cultural dimensions interact to construct meaning. The fragmented dialogues and inner monologues are revealed as manifestations of a fractured psyche burdened by patriarchal norms, familial expectations, and unattainable ideals, reflecting the protagonist's fragile identity and unresolved trauma. The study situates these textual disruptions within broader discursive practices, where mental health remains stigmatized and silenced, producing a social condition in which psychological pain must be hidden to preserve social appearances. This discursive hegemony restricts the articulation of suffering outside normalized boundaries, exposing the cultural paradox between individual needs for recognition and societal demands for perfection. By foregrounding this tension, the film demonstrates how language, silence, and narrative fragmentation

function as symbolic struggles for authority over identity and memory, offering a critical reflection on the socio-discursive construction of trauma in contemporary culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In order to share this research on identity, thoughts, and trauma as examined in *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*, the author is extremely grateful to the Journal of Language and Literature of Padang State University. The research's critical discourse viewpoint has been sharpened thanks in large part to the editorial team's thorough review process and helpful feedback. The author also acknowledges the support of academic discussions on language, literature, and cultural studies by Padang State University's Faculty of Language and Arts, that improves critical analyses like this research.

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