



Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis of the Representation of Family Communication in the Animated Film *Coco* (2017)

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to analyze the construction and interpretation of family communication in the animated film *Coco* (2017) using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach. The research focuses on how visual and narrative elements represent communication patterns within a family context, particularly through symbols such as the guitar, the *ofrenda*, ancestral photographs, and dialogues between characters. This study employs a qualitative method with media text analysis. Data were collected through observation and documentation of selected scenes, then analyzed using Barthes's three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how meanings are produced and culturally embedded within the film. The results show that at the denotative level, family communication is portrayed through everyday interactions and conflicts between characters. At the connotative level, these interactions reflect emotional bonds, authority structures, and the tension between individual desires and family expectations. At the myth level, the film reinforces cultural ideologies that prioritize family unity, respect for ancestors, and obedience to familial authority. In conclusion, *Coco* constructs family communication as a value-laden process shaped by cultural beliefs and intergenerational relationships, emphasizing harmony, collective identity, and the preservation of family traditions.

INTRODUCTION

The family is the smallest social unit that is the first space for individuals to learn to communicate, build identity, and understand the values and norms that apply in society. In this context, family communication does not only take place through the exchange of verbal messages, but also through nonverbal expressions, symbols, traditions, and patterns of power relations between family members. According to Joseph A. DeVito, family communication is the process of exchanging messages that are influenced by emotional closeness, social roles, and norms that develop in the family. Through this process, the family functions as a means of forming individual identity, internalizing values, and maintaining emotional relationships between generations (Destarini & Bona, 2025). In modern society, the dynamics of family communication have undergone significant changes due to technological developments, generational differences, and increasing demands for individuality. This condition often gives rise to conflicts between traditional family values and individual aspirations. Therefore, family communication cannot be understood only as a process of conveying messages, but also as a social and cultural process that involves negotiating the meaning and power relations in the family (Faza & Soedarsono, 2022).

Mass media, especially films, is one of the important mediums in representing these dynamics. Films serve not only as entertainment, but also as cultural texts that construct social reality through symbols, narratives, and characters. One of the films that strongly represents the dynamics of family communication is *Coco* (2017), which was produced by Pixar Animation Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Pictures. The film depicts the conflict between individual desires and family traditions through the character of Miguel who aspires to

be a musician, while his family forbids music as a result of past experiences (Patriansah et al., 2022).

Symbols such as guitars, photos of ancestors, and family altars (*Ofrenda*) in the film not only serves as an aesthetic element, but also as a form of symbolic communication that represents family values, collective memory, and intergenerational relationships (Difa & Setyawan, 2024). To understand the meaning behind these symbols, an analytical approach is needed that is able to uncover the hidden structure of the sign and ideology (Alex, 2017:145). In this study, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is used which explains that signs consist of markers and signs that form denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings as a naturalized ideological system (Destarini & Bona, 2025). In addition, this study also uses Stuart Hall's theory of representation which emphasizes that the media does not simply reflect reality, but actively constructs meaning through a system of cultural signs and codes (Sholichah et al., 2023). This approach is reinforced by DeVito's concept of family communication as well as the theory of symbolic communication which explains that social interaction is formed through the exchange of symbols that are interpreted together.

A number of previous studies have examined films *Coco* from various perspectives. Research (Toloh, 2020) emphasizing the importance of family memory and respect for ancestors in shaping cultural identity. (Syafuruddin Pohan, 2023) found that cultural symbols in film serve as a medium of communication between generations. (Patriansah et al., 2022) examine the conflict of values between tradition and modernity in film narratives. (Wijaya & Winduwati, 2025) Through the semiotic approach, it shows the existence of a myth of a harmonious family that normalizes parental authority.

Meanwhile, (Nurjanah et al., 2024) Highlighting the role of visual symbols in establishing cultural meaning in animated films. However, there is still a research gap, namely there have not been many studies that specifically integrate Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis with a focus on the representation of family communication in film *Coco* in depth to the level of myth (Barthes, 2017). Previous research has tended to highlight aspects of culture or symbols in general, without comprehensively examining how family communication is constructed through signs, as well as how certain ideologies are normalized through media.

Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in the integrative analysis between Barthes' semiotics and the concept of family communication to reveal the representation, meaning, and ideology of family communication in film. Based on this description, the purpose of this study is to analyze how family communication is represented in films *Coco* through visual symbols, narratives, and interactions between characters using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. In addition, this research also aims to uncover the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings contained in these representations, as well as to understand the ideology of family communication that is normalized in film.

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of understanding how the media shapes public perception of family communication, especially in the midst of the social and cultural changes that are happening today. The results of this research are expected to contribute to the study of communication, especially family communication and media analysis, as well as a reference in understanding the role of film as a medium for the construction of social values. The formulation of the problem in this study is how to represent family communication in the film *Coco* (2017). What is the meaning of denotations, connotations, and myths in the symbols that represent family communication in the film. How the ideology of family communication is normalized through representation in the film *Coco*.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a semiotic approach. This method was chosen because the research aims to understand and interpret symbolic meaning in the representation of family communication in film *Coco* (2017). A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth analysis of media texts through the interpretation of signs, symbols, and the cultural context contained in them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The main instrument in this study is the researcher (human instrument) which plays a role in identifying, selecting, and interpreting data.

The type of data used consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data in the form of scenes, dialogues, and visual symbols in the film *Coco* which is produced by Pixar Animation Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Pictures. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained through literature studies such as books, scientific journals, and previous research relevant to semiotics, media representation, and family communication. This study does not use human sources, so it does not involve informant selection techniques (Adlini et al., 2022). Data collection techniques were carried out through non-participant observation and documentation.

Researchers watched the film repeatedly to identify the parts that represented family communication, then documented it in the form of screenshots and descriptive notes. Literature studies are used to strengthen theoretical foundations (Waruwu, 2023). Data analysis is carried out in stages, including data reduction, categorization, and interpretation. The data that has been collected is grouped by themes such as visual symbols, dialogue, and family interactions. (Ilhami et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the analysis was carried out using Roland Barthes' semiotics through three stages, namely denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural meaning), and myth (normalized ideology) (Miles et al., 2014). Conclusions were drawn by integrating the results of the analysis to explain how family communication was represented as well as the values and ideologies contained in the film. (Barthes, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the representation of family communication in the film *Coco* (2017) using Roland Barthes' semiotics at three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. The analysis focused on how symbols, dialogues, and interactions between characters form normalized family communication patterns and ideologies.

Table 1. Summary of Semiotic Analysis Findings

Yes	Scene	Denotation	Connotations	Myths/Ideology
1	The beginning of family conflict	Dad leaves family	Trauma & rejection of music	Family > individual ambitions
2	Ban on plazas	Michael was banned from participating in the talent show	One-way communication	Absolute senior authority
3	Ofrenda	Ancestral rituals	Control through tradition	Obedience = loyalty
4	Apron Giving	Miguel was forced to work	Identity is forced	Compulsory professional heritage
5	Father's dialogue	Miguel is convinced	Emotional distress	Destiny is determined by the family
6	Hidden photos	Evidence of musicians' ancestry	Hidden truths	Lineage-based identity
7	Guitar crushed	Conflict escalates	Identity repression	Violence for the sake of "good"
8	Conditional blessing	Music ban conditions	Full control	Parents are always right
9	Family pressure	Collective support	Social pressure	Majority = Truth
10	Remember Me Song	Miguel sings	Music as a healer	Honesty beats tradition

The results of the study show that family communication in *the film Coco* is dominated by a monopoly communication pattern, where the highest authority is in senior figures (Mama Imelda and Grandma). Communication takes place one-way, with no room for negotiation for younger family members.

These findings are in line with research (Kevinia et al., 2024) which states that families with a high control orientation tend to implement conformance communication, i.e. demand uniformity of values and obedience to authority. In the film, this can be seen from dialogues such as "*If Grandma says no, then you can't*", which affirms the dominance of hierarchical structures in the family. In addition, there is also a form of collective communication pressure, where other family members function as a reinforcement of authority (scene 9). This is in accordance with the findings (Patriansah et al., 2022) that family communication often involves symbolic alliances to maintain dominant values.

At the level of connotation, the film shows the conflict between individual identity (Miguel as a musician) and collective identity (the Rivera family as a shoemaker). Symbols such as guitars, aprons, and ofrendas become symbolic communication mediums that are full of meaning. Guitar → self-identity and freedom of expression. Apron → control and inheritance of identity. Ofrenda → the legitimacy of tradition and collective memory

These findings are supported by research (Santoso & Winingsih, 2022) which states that meaning in the media is formed through symbolic representation, not just a reflection of reality. In this context, the film *Coco* establishes the meaning that family conflict is not only a matter of behavior, but also a battle of meaning between tradition and individuality. Furthermore, the song scene *Remember Me* shows the existence of negotiation of the meaning of communication. Music that was previously interpreted as a threat has turned into a tool of reconciliation. This is in line with research (Turner et al., 2024) which states that family communication is dynamic and allows for the redefinition of meaning through emotional interaction.

At the myth level, this study found that some of the ideologies normalized through the film Family are more mainstream than individuals. Parents are always right. Tradition is unquestionable. Obedience is a form of affection. Self-sacrifice for the sake of family is ideal. These myths work by naturalizing family control as normal. This is in accordance with Barthes' concept that myth serves to disguise ideology into "general truth". However, the film also presents a counter-myth, especially in the final scenes, that Honesty is more important than repressive traditions. Emotional communication can improve family relationships. Individual identity still has a space in the family. These findings reinforce the research (Belda-Medina & Calvo-Ferrer, 2022) which states that animated films not only reproduce ideologies, but also open up space for criticism of established social structures.

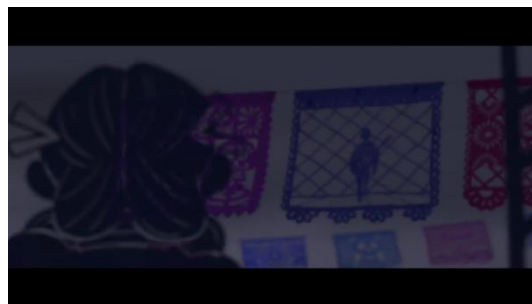


Figure 1. Movie preview (01.15-02.50)

In the early footage of the film, Miguel tells the story of the origin of how his family hates music. The conflict began with his great-grandfather who loved music so much that he chose to leave his family in order to become a famous musician, but he never returned home. This disappointed his family and made a ban on not playing music. In the scene, it shows a little coco who sees her father's departure. After her father's departure, Imelda's mother threw away all musical instruments and switched professions as a shoemaker in order to continue living and provide for her daughter. The shoe business built by Mama Imelda is growing rapidly so that the profession has become a family heritage for generations. They think music has destroyed their family but shoes bring their family together.

Denotation: Little Coco and her mother watch their father leave the house with a guitar. Right after that, his mother, mama Imelda threw away all the musical equipment and replaced it with equipment to make shoes. The shoe business then developed and became a family profession that was inherited from generation to generation.

Connotation: Little Coco who sees her father leaving shows the breakup event live. It symbolizes sadness, loss, and the feeling of abandonment by the father figure. Coco's gaze depicts the feelings of sadness and confusion of a child who has to be separated from his parents. Mama Imelda's act of throwing away musical instruments symbolizes the rejection of music which is considered the cause of the family's destruction. Instead, the shoemaker profession became a symbol of hard work, responsibility, and family unity. Through this incident, the Rivera family established a rule that music was prohibited because it was considered to have a bad impact on family harmony.

Myth: Family should take precedence over personal ambitions. In traditional family values in Mexico, the family is seen as the center of life that must be taken care of. Music in this story is considered a symbol of individual freedom that can threaten the stability of the family, while shoes become a symbol of responsibility, hard work, and family unity. This scene establishes the myth that "suffering gives parents the right to control the child's future". This ideology naturalizes the view that a mother's decision based on heartache is the right thing to do and should be followed by all family members without question. Music is considered the moral enemy in the family. This myth reinforces the Monopoly communication pattern in the Rivera family, where one side defines the value of truth. The submission of Coco and her entire family to the decision legitimizes that in the family, total obedience to tradition is the highest form of devotion.



Figure 2. Family prohibition (07.55-09.40)

While Miguel was polishing a musician's shoes in a mariachi plaza, he told the musician how his family hated music but he had a dream of becoming a musician which was very contrary to his family's. The musician offered his guitar to be played by Miguel, but before Miguel could play his guitar, his grandmother came and scolded the musician for giving the guitar to Miguel. When he got home, his father scolded Miguel for what had happened and insisted that if he forbade her not to go to the plaza, Miguel should not go there.

Dad: if grandma says "don't go to the plaza" you can't go to the plaza
Miguel: how about tonight?

Dad: what's going on tonight?

Miguel: They held a talent show. And maybe I can..

Mom: sign up?

The look on her face showed anger when she heard the conversation

Grandma: Now she's de los muertos. No one should leave. Tonight is for the family

Denotation: Miguel's father and mother stand opposite Miguel in the shoe workshop. Grandma appeared with a look of anger when she heard Miguel's plan to participate in the talent show. Dad emphasized Grandma's prohibition from going to the plaza. Miguel tries to negotiate his participation in the talent show, but is stopped by Grandma who states that the night of *Dia de los Muertos* is for the family only.

Connotation: The communication displayed is one-way (top-down). Dad and Mom serve as an "extension" of Grandma's authority, indicating the Monopoly's communication pattern. Grandmothers as powerful figures prefer to direct or rule rather than discuss fairly. Miguel's desire to participate in the talent show is connotated as an act of defiance of family identity. Plaza venues and music activities are considered a threat to the integrity of the family. Dad's emphasis that "if Grandma says no, then it's not allowed" shows that obedience to the orders of senior figures is a norm that must be upheld over individual desires

Myth: Grandmothers as senior figures have absolute moral legitimacy to govern the lives of younger family members. By packaging the prohibition as a form of "family protection" during *Dia de los Muertos*, the film hides the restraint side of the individual behind the value of family affection. In the dialogue the grandmother who says "tonight is for the family" is used to suppress Miguel's personal aspirations. The ideology built is that loyalty to the family is manifested through adherence to tradition, not through support for individual dreams.



Figure 3. Grandma advising Miguel (09.44-10.40)

In the scene, the grandmother invites Miguel to the Ofrenda room and advises Miguel after what happened in the Mariachi Plaza.

Grandma: *dia de los muertos* happens the night of the year that our ancestors came to visit. We put their photos on the ofrenda so that their spirits can cross. This is very important. If we don't, they won't be able to come. We make all these foods, put on things that they like to live on. All this is for the sake of uniting the family. I don't want you to sneak into that place.

Miguel tries to leave but is pulled back by the grandmother

Grandma: Where are you going?

Miguel: I think we're done

Grandma: Oh my gosh, being part of this family means being here with the family. I don't want to see you end up like that....

(pointing to a photo of Coco's father being torn in Ofrenda)

Miguel: Like Papa Mama Coco?

Grandma: don't call that guy! It is better for him to be forgotten

Denotation: This scene shows Miguel and his grandmother in front of an *ofrenda* containing photos of deceased family members, *marigolds*, candles, and the favorite foods of the ancestors. Grandma explained the function of the *Dia de los Muertos* ritual as a time where families gather and commemorate ancestors so that they can "cross" into the human world. Grandma also gave a stern warning so that Miguel does not end up like the man in the torn photo, namely the photo of mama coco's father.

Connotation: the *ofrenda* is a symbol of the collective memory of the family. Grandmother used the altar as a prop to communicate family rules. Pointing to a torn photo sends a connotative message about exclusion. The message: "Your presence in this family depends on your obedience to our rules." Communication Pattern: This scene represents the Monopoly Pattern. Grandma set the single condition for being "part of the family", which is to be there and follow the traditions without compromise. Miguel is positioned as a passive listener who is "pulled back" into the family value system.

Myth: Movies naturalize the ideology that forgetting someone through tearing up photos or not putting someone's photo on the *ofrenda* is a just punishment for those who violate family harmony. Through the sentence "All this for the sake of uniting the family," the myth arises that the authoritarian actions of a senior in the family are justified as long as the goal is to maintain the integrity of the group. The restraint on Miguel's desire to play music is considered a "rescue" attempt so that he does not end up like his forgotten ancestor.



Figure 4. Grandma gives Miguel an apron (13.35-15.24)

The scene where Miguel tries to escape with his guitar with a stray dog he named Dante to the mariachi plaza to participate in a talent show. But his efforts did not go smoothly because he saw his uncle. Miguel ran in fear towards the *ofrenda* room. There he hid his guitar and his stray dog under an *ofrenda*. As he turned around, grandmother, father and mother appeared.

Dad: miguel, your grandmother has an amazing idea! We all decided it was time for you to join the workplace! (while wearing a shoe craftsman's apron for Miguel)

Miguel: What?

Dad: don't shine shoes anymore, you'll make shoes every day after school

Grandma: oh miguel finally continues the family tradition. On the day *he de los muertos*, your ancestors would have been proud.

Denotation: This scene shows Miguel in the *ofrenda* room after failing to escape to participate in a talent show at marichi plaza. Miguel's father appeared with a happy expression and put a shoemaker's apron (apron) on Miguel's body. Beside them, Grandma (Abuelita) and Miguel's mother watched with a big smile.

Connotation: The shoemaker's apron is not just a workwear, but a symbol of the "uniform of identity" or the shackles that bind Miguel to family expectations. This scene shows an *Unbalanced Split Pattern* towards Monopoly. Although Dad said "We all decide," the decision was still one-way because Miguel was not given the opportunity to refuse. Subtle Control: Dad's use of the word "great idea" is a form of persuasive communication aimed at suppressing Miguel's personal desires to align with the family's collective desires. This incident takes place near *the ofrenda*, which notes that this decision was "approved" by the ancestors, so Miguel would feel morally guilty if he objected.

Myth: Movies naturalize the view that being an adult in a family means having to accept the family's professional inheritance unconditionally. "Making ancestors proud" can only be done through the same profession (shoes). The joyful expressions of all family members except Miguel who looked confused normalized the ideology that the imposition of will by parents is a form of "affection" and "celebration" of the child's future, not a restraint of talent.



Figure 5. Miguel doubts that he can make shoes (15.30-15.57)

Miguel: What if I'm not an expert in shoemaking?

Dad: Calm down Miguel, your family is here to help you. You are a rivera, and that rivera is?

Miguel: shoemaker forever

Dad: that's just my son! (while hugging miguel)

Father walked out with a happy laugh followed by his mother and grandmother while after they left, Miguel put on a sad face

Denotation: The scene shows the interaction between Miguel and his father after the apron is put on.

Connotation: At this level, the dialogue is not just a regular question-and-answer, but a subtly imposed "Pledge of Allegiance". This scene reflects a *Balanced Split Pattern*. My father positioned himself as a mentor, but the question "Is Rivera that?" was a form of *leading question* that left no room for any other answer than "shoemaker". The family's hugs and happy laughter after Miguel said the sentence was connotated as a *social reward* for obedience, however, Miguel's sad face at the end of the scene indicates that there is a dissonance in communication of what he says verbally contrary to his inner feelings.

Myth: This scene reinforces the myth of "Biological Destiny". The film naturalizes the ideology that an individual's talent or desire is irrelevant when compared to a clan identity (Rivera). Being a "Rivera" automatically means becoming a "Shoemaker". There is a myth that the happiness of the extended family is more valuable than the happiness of the individual. The happy laughter of Dad, Mom, and Grandma normalizes the view that as long as the tradition is maintained, then the family is considered "fine", even if there is one member (Miguel) who suffers in silence.

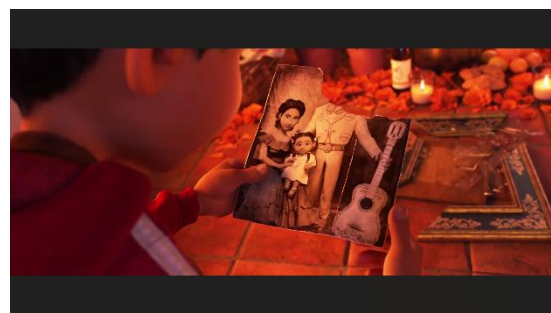


Figure 6. Discovery behind the photo fold (16.50-17.07)

When a stray dog named Dante accidentally drops a picture frame of the *coco* family. Miguel found that the photo was folded. The fold hides a portrait of his great-grandfather's guitar. The guitar belonged to a famous musician named Ernesto de la Cruz. Miguel happily finds the courage to face his family and pursue his dreams.

Miguel: Dad! Dad! "I know who my grandfather is. Mama Coco's father is Ernesto de la Cruz

Dad: what are you talking about

Miguel: I'm going to be a musician!

Denotation: This scene features a photo frame of the Rivera family that falls and breaks, revealing the part of the photo that has been folded. Inside the fold, a man's body was seen holding a white guitar identical to the guitar belonging to the famous musician, Ernesto de la Cruz. Miguel showed the photo to his father with a very happy expression.

Connotation: The folded photo is a symbol of the 'silenced truth' or communication censorship within the Rivera family. The guitar in the photo is not just a musical instrument, but a moral license for Miguel to go against family rules. With evidence that his ancestors were musicians, Miguel felt he had the same right as the shoe tradition to determine his life.

Myth: Movies naturalize the ideology that a person's talent and destiny are "written" in the history of their ancestors. The discovery of the photo was considered a natural sign that Miguel was "destined" to become a musician. Physical evidence (photo) has a higher legal force than the family's oral rule. Miguel believes that by showing the photo, he will automatically get the family's approval, because he thinks the family's identity should be based on historical facts, not just trauma.

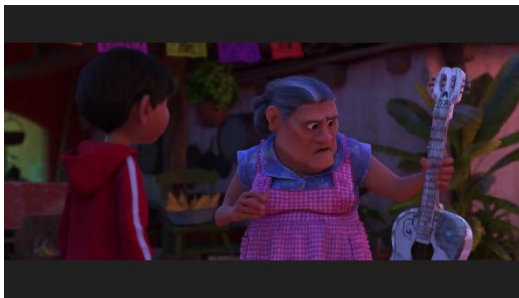


Figure 7. Grandma smashes Miguel's guitar (16.54-18.05)

After Miguel boldly said he wanted to be a musician, his grandmother immediately dismantled all of Miguel's musical instruments that he had been hiding on the roof of the house. Grandma felt so angry and disappointed that she destroyed Miguel's guitar.

Grandma: what is all this? You hid it from your family?

Tio Berto: this is the reason he often goes to the plaza

Tia gloria: filling her head with crazy fantasies

Miguel: it's not a fantasy, this man is Ernesto de la Cruz, the great musician of all time

We never knew anything about this man. Or whoever he was, he left his family. This is not my son's future

Miguel: Papa, you said my family would lead me, de la cruz was my family, I was supposed to play music

Grandma: don't, that man's music is a curse. I won't let that

Dad: listen to your family, no music

Miguel picked up his guitar

Miguel: listen to me play

Dad: the end of the debate!

Miguel continued to play his guitar in front of his family and was snatched away by his grandmother

Grandma: do you want to end up like that man? Forgot and your photo is not posted on the ofrenda?

Miguel: I don't care about that stupid ofrenda!

All the family members were very surprised to hear what Miguel had to say. It made my grandmother very angry and destroyed Miguel's guitar.

Denotation: the entire family rallies around Miguel after his secret is revealed. Grandma dismantles Miguel's musical instrument hidden in the roof. There is a verbal argument in which family members refer to Miguel's wishes as a "crazy fantasy,". But the climax of the conflict is that after Miguel declares that he doesn't care about *the ofrenda*, Grandma snatches Miguel's guitar and smashes it to pieces in front of Miguel's eyes.

Connotation: the guitar is connotated as Miguel's newfound "self". Destroying the guitar means "killing" Miguel's desire and personal identity so that he can return to being an obedient "Rivera". Grandma's threat of "her photo is not installed in the *ofrenda*" is a connotation form of the highest social sanction in their culture, which is the elimination of existence (forgotten forever. This scene is an extreme embodiment of the Monopoly Pattern. When negotiations fail, the authority figure (Grandma) uses physical force to stop communication. The Father's sentence, "End of the debate!", confirms that in the Rivera family, there is no room for two-way discussions if it threatens tradition.

Myth: the film naturalizes that the act of destroying a guitar is justified if the goal is to "save" family members from a "curse" or a bad future. The Rivera family built the myth that music would automatically bring suffering and family division. This ideology is used to validate their hatred without the need to understand Miguel's perspective. The family's shocked reaction when Miguel cursed at *the ofrenda* pointed to the myth that tradition is sacred and should not be violated, even if it is oppressive to individuals.

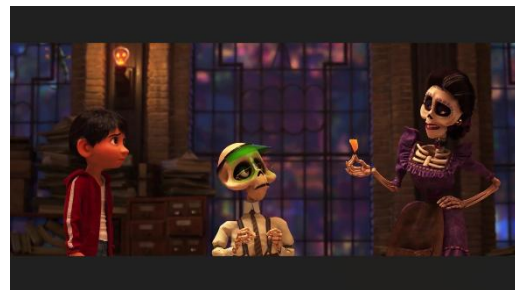


Figure 8. Conditional blessing by Mama Imelda in the spirit realm (30.38-31.12)

When Miguel was in the spirit realm, he met his family. However, Imelda's mother is unable to cross the marigold bridge to visit the surviving family on the day she is *de los muertos* because Miguel brings a photo of Imelda's mother that he took from *Ofrenda* when he wanted to show his surviving family about the discovery of his great-grandfather.

The condition if Miguel wants to return to the world of the living is the blessing of the family members who are in the spirit realm using marigold petals. The giver of the blessing can give any condition. Mama Imelda gave him the condition to never play music again and Miguel was forced to agree to the condition and he returned to the world of the living.

Denotation: Imelda's mama holding the petals of the orange-glowing marigold stood in front of Miguel in a sacred spirit realm setting. Mama Imelda stuck the flower petals to Miguel while saying a verbal condition: Miguel was allowed to return to the world of the living on the condition that he "never

play music again". Miguel, who is in a desperate situation to not become a skeleton forever, gives verbal approval and accepts the blessing, which then makes him instantly move back to the real world.

Connotation: in the Rivera family, the individual's right to live/return home must be paid for in obedience to family rules. Family affection is described as something that has a "price". Mama Imelda represents the highest source of authority. The use of the term "don't make music" notes an attempt to control Miguel's future based on Imelda's own past trauma. This representation shows a *Monopoly Pattern*. Mama Imelda is in full control of Miguel's fate. There is no room for discussion, negotiation, or compromise. Miguel is positioned as a weak party who must accept these conditions for his survival.

Myth: the myth that parents always know best naturalizes the ideology that parents or ancestors have a moral right to determine the interests and talents of their children and grandchildren. The music ban was positioned as a "protection" so that Miguel would not suffer the same bad fate as his great-grandfather. The myth that good family members are those who are willing to sacrifice their personal dreams for the sake of family harmony and moral standards. Imelda's action is considered an act of "saving", even though ideologically it is a form of restraint on Miguel's freedom of expression.

Figure 9. Michael's uncle and aunt in the spirit realm persuade him to obey Mama Imelda's terms (31.34-32.06)

Miguel returns to the spirit world because he disobeys the requirements of Imelda's mother. This made Imelda's mother very angry, but Miguel still denied and no longer wanted to agree to Imelda's mother's terms. He asked his other family members to give him unconditional blessings so that he could return to the world of the living and play music. However, all her aunts and uncles refused because they felt that only Imelda's mother had the right to give her blessing.

Mama Imelda: Don't complicate this, son. Go home on my condition or you won't come home

Miguel: How much do you hate music?

Mama Imelda: I won't let you fall down the same path as that man

Tia Victoria: Listen to Mama Imelda

Uncle Oscar: He wants to take care of you

Tia rosita: don't argue

Denotation: This scene shows Miguel surrounded by members of his extended family in the spirit realm after he returns for violating Mama Imelda's terms. Mama Imelda stood as the center of attention, supported by her uncle and aunt.

Connotations: uncles and aunts play the role of not only family members but "supporters of authority". Their endorsements of "Listen to Mama Imelda", "Don't deny" note that in the Rivera family, the truth is determined collectively by seniors. When the entire family supports one authoritarian decision, it creates peer *pressure* for miguel.

Myth: the film naturalizes the ideology that individual authority's disapproval of family traditions is a mistake. The support from his uncle and aunt builds the myth that the "truth" is what the majority of the family agrees on.

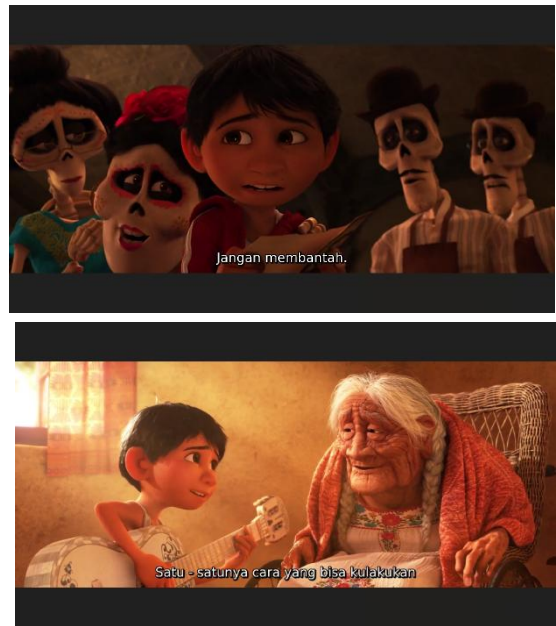


Figure 10. Miguel sings the song remember me for mama coco (90.41-92.00)

Miguel: Mama Coco, your dad wants you to listen to this (Miguel sings the song Remember Me that Mama Coco's father created for Mama Coco). Miguel sang the song remember me with deep feelings. Unexpected things happen. Mama Coco sang with Miguel and regained recognition of her family members.

Description: Miguel sings while holding a guitar in front of Mama Coco who is elderly and has a declining memory. When the song "Remember Me" was sung, Mama Coco's facial expression changed, her eyes lit up, and she began to sing along with Miguel.

Connotation: in the Rivera family music has always been considered a "threat". However, in this scene, music is connoted as a bridge of memory that is able to break through cognitive barriers and emotional trauma that have been shackling the Rivera family. If previously Grandma closed the communication meeting about Mama Coco's father (by forbidding the mention of his name), Miguel conducted honest intergenerational communication through music. Mama Coco singing along is a sign that she "received" the message. It is a form of negotiation of meaning in which music is no longer considered a destroyer, but rather a unifier.

Mama Coco's response signifies the return of the identity that has been hidden. Myth: honest truths (about paternal affection) are always stronger than lies protected by tradition (the banning of music by Mama Imelda). There is a myth that music has the power to heal decades-old family wounds. The ideology built is that honest and sincere communication (through song) can destroy authoritarian patterns that have been deeply rooted for generations.

Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis of the Representation of Family Communication in the Animated Film *Coco* (2017)

Coco's animated film represents the dynamics of family communication through symbols, dialogues, and actions of its characters. To understand the hidden meanings behind these scenes, this study uses the semiotic approach put forward by Roland Barthes. In Barthes' theory, signs are analyzed through

three levels of meaning, namely **Denotations, Connotations, and Myths**. Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a sign, a connotation to a meaning formed through a cultural context, while myth is an ideology or social value that is naturalized through media representation (Barthes, 2017).

Based on the results of the analysis, the film *Coco* Build a representation of family communication through various key symbols such as music, shoes, family photos, and *Ofrenda*. These symbols not only serve as narrative elements, but also as signs that produce social meanings regarding family relationships, parental authority, and conflicts between traditions and individual dreams. This shows that the media not only conveys stories, but also shapes social understanding of family realities through a system of signs (Alex, 2017:145).

At a **denotation level**, the film shows the Rivera family conflict that began with Miguel's great-grandfather's decision to leave the family to pursue a career as a musician. This incident triggered Mama Imelda to ban music in the family and replace it with the tradition of making shoes. The ban continues to be passed down from generation to generation until it arises a conflict when Miguel has a desire to become a musician. Scenes such as the destruction of Miguel's guitar, the giving of a shoemaker's apron, and the prohibition of playing music are direct illustrations of the communication practices in the Rivera family.

At the level **connotation**, the various symbols in the film contain deeper meanings. The shoes are connoted as a symbol of responsibility, hard work, and the identity of the Rivera family. On the contrary, music is connoted as a threat that can damage family harmony. The scene of the destruction of the guitar by Miguel's grandmother, for example, not only shows anger, but also becomes a symbol of rejection of Miguel's personal identity. In the context of family communication, the scene shows a pattern of communication that is **Authoritarian or Monopoly**, where family decisions are determined by senior figures with no room for discussion for younger members. This kind of communication pattern often appears in traditional families that place authority on older family members (Destarini & Bona, 2025).

More ideological meanings emerge at the level **Myth**. The film naturalizes the idea that family should take precedence over individual ambitions. This value appears repeatedly through the dialogue and actions of the characters. The ban on playing music is positioned as a form of protection for the family, even though it is actually a form of restraint on Miguel's freedom. In Barthes' perspective, myth works by concealing its ideological nature so that it appears to be a natural truth in social life (Barthes, 2017).

This representation can be further understood through the media representation theory of Stuart Hall. According to Hall, the media does not simply reflect reality, but actively **constructing meaning through a system of signs and language** (Alex, 2017:145). In the movie *Coco*, the Rivera family is represented as a traditional family that strongly upholds the value of loyalty to tradition and ancestors. Through the symbol *Ofrenda*, family photos, and the Día de los Muertos ritual, the film establishes the meaning that family identity is formed through collective memory and respect for ancestors. The representation also shows the existence of **Negotiation Meaning**.

When Miguel sings a song *Remember Me* to Mama Coco, music that was previously considered a threat has actually

become a means of family reconciliation. This scene shows the change in the meaning of musical symbols from "destroyer of the family" to "link between generations". In Hall's perspective, these changes suggest that meaning in media is dynamic and can be reproduced through a process of social interpretation (Alex, 2017:145).

From the point of view **The concept of family communication**, the film shows several communication patterns that develop within the Rivera family. At the beginning of the story, communication is dominated by **Monopoly Pattern**, where senior figures such as Mama Imelda and Abuelita have full authority in determining family rules. This pattern can be seen in various scenes of music banning and unilateral decisions regarding Miguel's future. In this communication pattern, younger family members are expected to show obedience without questioning the decisions that have been made (Sholichah et al., 2023). As the story progresses, the film begins to show a shift towards a more open communication pattern. The scene when Miguel sings a song for Mama Coco becomes an important moment that reopens intergenerational communication.

Music serves as an emotional communication medium that is able to reveal the truth that has been hidden in the Rivera family. This event marked the transformation of family relationships from authoritarian communication to more empathetic and understanding communication. The findings of this study are also in line with several previous studies on family representation in animated films. Research shows that modern animated films often feature conflicts between **Family traditions and individual identity**, especially in the character of a child who is trying to pursue his dreams (Santoso & Winingsih, 2022) Other research has also shown that cultural symbols in animated films are used to convey family values as well as intergenerational relationships (Patriansah et al., 2022).

In addition, the study of film semiotics has also found that Barthes' approach to semiotics is effective in uncovering the ideologies hidden in media texts (Mukti & Asriadi, 2023). Analysis of denotations, connotations, and myths allowed researchers to see how media not only conveyed stories, but also established certain views of family, traditions, and social relationships.

Thus, the results of this study show that *the film Coco* not only functions as entertainment, but also as a cultural text that represents the dynamics of family communication. Through symbols, dialogue, and conflicts between characters, the film depicts how the values of tradition, family authority, and individual dreams interact with each other. Barthes' semiotic analysis shows that the meaning built in the film does not stop at the surface story, but also contains social myths about family loyalty, the power of tradition, and the importance of honest communication in resolving family conflicts.

CONCLUSION

This study found that *the film Coco* represents family communication as a process that is not neutral, but is loaded with power relations, cultural values, and traumatic experiences inherited between generations. Key findings suggest that in the early stages, communication within the Rivera family was **authoritarian and one-way**, with senior figures monopolizing the meaning of truth and demanding full adherence to tradition.

This pattern is reinforced through cultural symbols such as *ofrenda*, ancestral photos, and the prohibition of music that serves as a tool of social control in the family.

At a deeper level of meaning, the prohibitions and conflicts that occur not only reflect family rules, but are also a form of **internalization of collective trauma** that is then legitimized as moral values. This film naturalizes the ideology that obedience to tradition is the highest form of loyalty to the family. However, other important findings show a **transformation of communication patterns**, from initially repressive to more dialogical and supportive. This change is characterized by the emergence of honest emotional communication, especially through musical symbols, which serve as a medium of reconciliation and restoration of intergenerational relationships.

The implications of this study confirm that the media, especially animated films, not only represent social reality, but also play a role in shaping people's views on family communication. *The film Coco* shows that family tradition and authority are not absolute, but rather can be negotiated through empathy, openness, and recognition of individual identity. However, this study has limitations. The analysis focused only on one film object so the results could not be generalized to representations of family communication in other media.

In addition, this study only uses a semiotic approach without involving the audience's perspective, so it has not described how the meaning is received or interpreted by the audience. Therefore, further research is recommended to conduct comparative studies with other films that raise the theme of family, as well as combine a semiotic approach with an analysis of audience reception. Thus, the study of family communication in the media can be developed more comprehensively and contextually.

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