The Arrival vs The Kid

“Language is the foundation of civilization. It is the glue that holds people together. It is the first weapon drawn in a conflict” (Villeneuve). Communication is the most crucial factor in becoming a civilization. Without communication, no civilization would function properly. The Kid and The Arrival show this very well. Through body language, The Kid draws its viewers to really pay attention to the storyline and how each person in the community is affected by the child. Through verbal language, The Arrival shows its viewers how people must be willing to adjust to different languages in order to form a more diverse and effective community. Though the forms of communication differ between each movie, The Arrival and The Kid both emphasize the importance of language.

The Kid is a silent film that was made in 1921. During this time, technology was very different from how it is today. The people did not have cell phones, and silent films were very popular, especially silent films directed by Charlie Chaplin. So, the viewers at that time found a particular interest in reading between the lines. Though there were no spoken words in The Kid, Charlie Chaplin got his storyline across to his viewers through body language and facial expressions. Though to people nowadays may see this as a meaningless form of communication, it is actually one of the most meaningful forms of communication.

Unlike The Kid, since The Arrival was made in 2016, verbal communication was valued more than nonverbal communication. In The Arrival, the characters are speaking throughout the
movie. Though this is true, *The Arrival* also shows the importance of body language. As the main characters are trying to teach the aliens English, they act out which word they want the aliens to write while also saying their form of the word to the aliens. As the aliens write out what is happening in their own language, the Americans are trying to decode the aliens’ language. This shows the importance of body language and verbal language. If the humans had done something odd and unfamiliar with their bodies in front of the aliens, the aliens might have gotten their words mixed up, which, in turn, would have ruined the whole plan. Greg Seigle and Marcus Koppensteiner wrote about body language and verbal language, saying that, “usually the two communication channels are strongly intertwined, making it difficult to interpret a specific gesture when no verbal information is present” (Koppensteiner and Seigle 1). Though body language is important, verbal communication is necessary as well. This is shown in *The Arrival* as Dr Banks’s is trying to figure out what the aliens are saying (Villeneuve).

Though they may differ in how they get it across to the audience, *The Kid* and *The Arrival* have very similar themes. Throughout *The Kid*, the audience sees how the mother struggles with her decision. Though the mother does not verbally admit to the audience that she misses her child, her remorse is seen through her facial expressions. Even when the mother becomes a celebrity, she is still upset about the child she left. This is seen through how the mother thinks about the child when she is alone. Even though the decision that the mother made was best for her and for the child, the mother still misses her child deeply (Chaplin). The theme of decision making and how it impacts the characters of the movie is very evident here even though it is only shown through the mother’s body language and facial expressions. One psychologist, named Laura Martinez once conducted an experiment to figure out which was more important: body language or facial expressions. At the end of her experiment, Martinez
concluded, “Both the face and the body carry emotional information. While perceiving the face and body together resulted in the best recognition of basic emotions, both the face and the body alone provided enough information to identify an emotion above the chance level” (Martinez 948). She was telling her readers that emotions can be read through face and body, separately or together. Words are not necessarily needed in order for the audience to know someone’s emotions. This point is proven in *The Kid*. Director, Charlie Chaplin managed to successfully get a very deep theme across to his audience using both face and body.

In Denis Villeneuve’s *The Arrival*, the same theme applies. When Dr. Banks starts to see the future, visions of her future husband and her future child play through her mind. As she continues to have these visions throughout the mission, one vision in particular is the most important. Dr. Banks’s little girl will die at a young age. Before this even happens, Dr. Banks’s husband will leave her because he will find out that she knows about her daughter’s death. Even though Dr. Banks knows the outcome, she still decides to follow through with the marriage and the parenting. Her decision making in her present time was going to greatly affect her future, and she knew it. Though words were not used to show Dr. Banks’s final choice, the director, Denis Villeneuve, gets the point across to the audience by changing the setting of the movie. At the end of the movie, Dr. Banks is seen at her house with her daughter. Denis Villeneuve uses this scene to show that Dr. Banks has made her decision to follow through with her life, despite the issues her decision may cause (Villeneuve).

Though the ways that the characters communicate in *The Kid* and *The Arrival* differ greatly, both movies show the importance of language in some form. Charlie Chaplin and Denis Villeneuve both succeed in getting their points across to their audiences. The theme of decision making and how it impacts the characters of the movie was made evident both verbally and
nonverbally. Altogether, though different in some forms of communication, *The Kid* and *The Arrival* both use forms of communication that were more popular to their times to successfully get their main themes across.
Works Cited


Villeneuve, Denis. *The Arrival*. Canada: FilmNation Entertainment