

The Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Blue and White Porcelain Element

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Abstract: As a symbol of Chinese traditional culture and elegant females, blue and white porcelain element has been widely applied in literary works and art design. Literary works and art design not only generate written language, but also convey multimodal language. They bring visual, audial, tactile and other sensory perception for people. The objective of this study is to analyze the multimodal language of literary works and art design. Through describing and analyzing the application of blue and white porcelain element in literary works and art design, the effect of blue and white porcelain element in literary works and art design is summarized and concluded.

Keywords: Blue and white porcelain element; Multimodal discourse analysis; Image

1. Introduction

As one of famous porcelains in Jingdezhen and Chinese art treasures, blue and white porcelain has a long history. Blue and white porcelain in Jingdezhen began in Tang Dynasty, developed in Yuan Dynasty and Ming Dynasty, and flourished in Qing Dynasty. Writers, poets, artists have often seen it as a symbol of Chinese traditional culture and elegant females and applied it in their literary works and art design. Blue and white porcelain element in literary works and art design refers to the image of blue and white porcelain in literary works and art design, such as the image of blue and white porcelain in Fang Wenshan's lyric Blue and White Porcelain and the image of blue and white porcelain in Cui Xianghua's film China Flower. As an important expression form of culture, literary works and art design convey meanings and express emotions. Novels, proses, films, poems and songs belong to the category of literary works and art design, and they convey meanings and emotions by means of various modalities. This study will describe the image of blue and white porcelain in literary works and art design, decode the multimodal language of these literary works and art design, and summarize the function of blue and white porcelain element in literary works and art design. The findings of this study will contribute to the transmission of blue and white porcelain culture and ceramic culture and the further understanding of Chinese traditional culture.

2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis refers to the decoding process of meaning contained in various semiotic resources (written languages, visual images, sounds, etc.).

With the development of media and technology, the genre of new social semiotic resources covers a wide range, including printed media, dynamic digital media, static digital media, and spatial 3-D design (O'Halloran, 2004). Multimodal discourse analysis is based on Halliday (1978)'s social semiotic language theory. Halliday believes that language is one of various semiotic resources (gestures, visual images, videos and music, etc.) and people use various semiotic resources to communicate or create meanings. The goal of multimodal discourse analysis is to describe these semiotic resources and decode their meanings.

2.1. Literature review

Since 1990s, linguists have paid more attention on multimodal discourse analysis. Based on Halliday (1994)'s systemic-functional grammar, social semiotic researchers have studied multimodal grammar, such as visual design grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), music grammar (van Leeuwen, 1999), color grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002), gesture grammar (Martinec, 2000), mathematic symbol grammar (O'Halloran, 2005). Within the framework of systemic-functional grammar, there are three language functions (ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function). The ideational function is conveying information, communicating meanings and building experience; the interpersonal function is building and maintaining the interpersonal relationship between two speakers or communicators; the textual function is describing the process of organizing information. The meanings and functions of multimodal discourse can be realized through all kinds of semiotic resources. Every semiotic system can be meaning potential or meaning resource. In the multimodal discourse analy-

sis, the meaning resource of semiotic system is highlighted for its problems in describing temporary and isolated symbols. It is difficult to describe and capture the relationships among these temporary and isolated symbols. The meaning potential of semiotic system overlaps, yet most of them have the scope and limitation of their meaning. Traffic signals can only be used for directing traffic and be meaningless in other situations. Every modality has its own advantage. For example, the meaning-conveying capability of visual pictures is higher than that of language. Thus, multimodal discourse can be more effective in finishing communicative tasks.

2.2. Developments

Firstly, with the further study of multimodal discourse analysis, researchers find that the thorough interpretation of various semiotic resources and multimodal discourse needs different disciplinary perspectives. Multimodal discourse researchers often do not understand the basic working mechanism of genres such as films and visual design and tend to have a false analysis and interpretation. At the same time, the interpretation and analysis of multimodal discourse is subjective. Multi-disciplinary perspective can solve above-mentioned problems and limitations. Recently, researchers have combined the latest mainstream achievements of target genres with multimodal discourse analysis. Bateman and Schmidt (2012) added mainstream cognitive film analysis and the criticism of structuralism semiotics film analysis in their book *Multimodal Film Analysis*.

Secondly, with the advancements of science technology and digital technology, it is difficult to analyze multimodal discourse in traditional ways. The developments of science technology contribute to the application of corpora and annotations in multimodal discourse analysis and the increase of psychological empirical researches concerning multimodal discourse analysis. ELAN and Anvil are two widely-used annotation softwares in multimodal discourse analysis, and specialized annotation softwares (e.g. Semiomix) are developed. At the same time, many multimodal discourse corpora (Multimodal Corpus Authoring, SCCSD) are built and developed. As for psychological empirical researches concerning multimodal discourse analysis, eye-tracking experiments are conducted to explore readers' cognition of visual discourse.

Thirdly, the research objects of multimodal discourse analysis are expanded. 3-D space, paralinguistic features, picture books, situated discourse, cartoons, classroom discourse, films and new media are covered in the research objects of multimodal discourse analysis. With the rapid development of digital technology, online communication, network news, network games and other new media have played an increasing important role in social life. Researchers have begun to study the connection

among different modalities and multimodal meaning construction and achieved some advancements.

3. The Application of Blue and White Porcelain Element

As a symbol of Chinese traditional culture and elegant females, blue and white porcelain element has been widely applied in literary works and art design. Novels, films and songs have often used blue and white porcelain element to construct meanings with different modalities.

3.1. The application of blue and white porcelain element in novels

As one of literary genres, novels are classified by content, language forms, and article length. Novels containing blue and white porcelain element are novels with the image of blue and white porcelain to reflect the real life and social culture. The representative works include Chen Lijiao's *Blue and White Porcelain Bowl* and Wei Xiaoying's *Blue and White Porcelain*. The four features of novels containing blue and white porcelain element are vivid characters, complete plots, detailed environment and the image or clue of blue and white porcelain. In Chen Lijiao's *Blue and White Porcelain Bowl*, there is a persistent heroine, the change process of a gambler, a quiet village environment and the clue of blue and white porcelain bowl. Blue and white porcelain bowl symbolizes a Chinese treasure and the spirit from generations to generations. While in Wei Xiaoying's *Blue and White Porcelain*, blue and white porcelain stands for a mysterious and unlucky ware and a nostalgic object.

3.2. The application of blue and white porcelain element in films

Films include film scripts, subtitles, dynamic videos and sounds. The film script can be divided into literary film script and film shooting script. Take an example, film *Tiny Times* and film *Harry Potter* are based on novel *Tiny Times* and novel *Harry Potter*. In this occasion, novels are literary film scripts and scripts adapted by directors and scriptwriters are film shooting scripts which are used for shooting films. Films containing blue and white porcelain element are films with the image or storyline of blue and white porcelain. The representative works include Cui Xianghua's *China Flower* and Hong Xiuming's *Porcelain Ambassador from the West*. In films containing blue and white porcelain element, the theme of ceramic cultural protection or international cultural exchange is expressed through the clue or image of blue and white porcelain. In Cui Xianghua's *China Flower*, blue and white porcelain symbolizes Chinese traditional culture and civilization history, and stands for elegant and firm females.

3.3. The application of blue and white porcelain element in songs

Songs include lyrics and melodies, thus they belong to the category of multimodal discourse. Songs are closely connected with poems, and they must follow the principle of emotion beauty, form beauty, artistic conception beauty and language beauty. Songs containing blue and white porcelain element refer to songs reflecting the theme of love and art with the image or clue of blue and white porcelain. The representative works include Fang Wenshan's Blue and White Porcelain. In Fang Wenshan's Blue and White Porcelain, blue and white porcelain symbolizes elegant and exquisite beauty. At the same time, blue and white porcelain builds up the atmosphere of a southern town with Chinese ancient culture. Through the image of blue and white porcelain, love-sickness, an elegant beauty, a southern town and fragrance of ink are vividly portrayed by this song.

4. The Image of Blue and White Porcelain

The image is the combination of emotions and forms, and the emotion is expressed by the form. The image of blue and white porcelain is the literary and artistic product of metaphor, symbolism and other rhetorical devices, its purpose is to make the literary works and artistic works more charming. The image of blue and white porcelain often combines the awareness of protecting Chinese traditional culture and the admiration of elegant females.

4.1. Chinese traditional culture

Chinese traditional culture is the culture reflecting Chinese civilization and Chinese features from generations to generations. Blue and white porcelain began in Tang Dynasty, developed in Yuan Dynasty and Ming Dynasty, and flourished in Qing Dynasty. With a history of thousands of years and profound culture, blue and white porcelain often is used to symbolize Chinese traditional culture. In 2008, blue and white porcelain was selected as one of "Top Ten Chinese Element" by Chinese media and ranked top two. For its excellent ceramic craft and its superb drawing design, blue and white porcelain can stand for Chinese traditional culture. The common patterns in blue and white porcelain include landscape, flowers and plants, animals, stories. These patterns reflect Chinese customs and real life, and meet Chinese traditional aesthetic standards.

4.2. Female elegant feature

Literary writers and artistic designers often use porcelain to stand for females and use pottery to symbolize males. For its exquisite and graceful feature, porcelain is the image of females; for its rough and powerful characteristic, pottery is the image of males. With an hourglass shape and a smooth surface, blue and white porcelain is

just like a female with a blue and white cheongsam. In Fang Wenshan's Blue and White Porcelain, the image of blue and white porcelain reminds us of the image of a female in southern town. In Cui Xianghua's China Flower, the name of the film is named by the name of the heroine for affirming the moral character of the heroine. Female Elegant features are reflected in temperament and character, and blue and white porcelain can convey these features.

5. Effects of Blue and White Porcelain Element in Multimodal Discourse

Multimodal discourse can realize its functions and purposes by its ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. Song Blue and White Porcelain, written by Fang Wenshan, a Taiwan lyricist, is a musical work with Chinese style. Blue and white porcelain is the major content and theme of the song. "Blue and white", "glazing color", "kilning" these words describe the precious blue and white porcelain; peony pattern, beautiful women pattern and fancy carp pattern in blue and white porcelain make the precious blue and white porcelain more vivid and alive. Fang Wenshan employs many literary devices to plant the image of blue and white porcelain in his song. The lyric can bring people the visual sensation, audio sensation, tactile sensation and smelling sensation. The major musical instruments of this song are Chinese zither and flute. As a Chinese stringed instrument, Chinese zither has a clear and melodious tone which reminds us of a beautiful woman. As a Chinese wind instrument, flute has a similar sound of birds and streams which builds up the environment of a scenic southern town. The combination of lyrics and sounds can better convey the theme of these literary works and artistic designs. In the film China Flower, "qinghua" symbolizes not only the precious blue and white porcelain, but also the elegant and firm heroine. In this film, the close-up image of blue and white porcelain and the excellent acting skill of Li Ruotong enrich the multimodal discourse of blue and white porcelain element. In addition, the appearance of Jingdezhen Yaoli Natural Scenic Spot, Jingdezhen Kiln and Longzhu Pavilion further strengthens the image of blue and white porcelain to better convey the theme --- respect, protect and inherit traditional ceramic culture.

6. Conclusion

With the development of new media, blue and white porcelain element has been widely applied in new media such as films and songs. In its application in literary works and artistic designs, blue and white porcelain often symbolizes Chinese traditional culture and female elegant feature. At the same time, these new media generate the multimodal discourse which bring people various sensations.

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