

# A Functional Study on Image Language's Getting Involved in News Reports

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## ABSTRACT

Traditional news reports use text more as the only transmission carrier, and use images (图像) less as a means of visual creation and information transmission. With the advent of the era of picture-reading, images as a communication medium that directly appeals to human visual perception have further triggered human visual instincts. The dissemination function of image symbols has once again attracted attention. The involvement of images in news reports breaks the regulations brought about by the limitation and exhaustion of words, and makes news expressed in single text have the openness and radioactivity of information. Based on the essence of image symbols and based on visual anthropology and communication theory, this paper analyzes the cross-lingual, interactive and reproducible functions of images in news reports, so as to start discussion on the influence of image language on news dissemination. Images are not only sensory symbols, but also recognition symbols and aesthetic symbols for human beings to obtain information.

**Keywords:** *image language, news reports, cross-linguistic feature, interactivity, reproducibility*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional media convey information to the audience through the text in the newspaper and the voiced language in the news broadcast. In the process of transformation from traditional media to new media, people have gradually entered the "era of picture-reading". Through pictures or images, audiences can have a more intuitive and in-depth understanding of events in news reports. As the most basic human senses, images can also most objectively react to nature, and they are the basis for humans to know and understand the world. "图" is to project the object image into human eyes through reflection or refraction under the basic action of light. "像" means that human beings process the received image and then portray it into the brain. Image is a representation and performance of objective things, and it is the most commonly used information carrier in human communication. It can also be said that an image is an objective reaction of objective things, which fully embodies the details and content of objective things. It is the main source of information for people. Because of the nature of the image, it is easier for the image to show the original appearance of things intuitively than the text, and it is more acceptable to the audience, and at the same time it can more accurately grasp the information that the image wants to convey. As an important tool in the

process of human cognition, image has always played an important role. It not only involves the field of humanities, but also includes the content of natural science. Images are the most intuitive means of communication in human social life. With the continuous development of new media, the media industry is not limited to the most primitive language and text communication. Regardless of the various platforms, the media industry will add image language to the entire communication process, making image language the most acceptable means of communication for current audiences. Language is a way for humans to link up and communicate. Like the concept of language, image language is also a way for people to link up and communicate, but it focuses on external and direct expressions. When people see any set of images in news reports, they first see the form of the image, then analyze the image, and finally understand its inner meaning through analysis. Image language not only provides convenience to people's lives, but also makes the dissemination of information more effective, intuitive and fast. Paul Levinson, a representative of the media environment school, proposed the theory of "media evolution". This theory mainly focuses on the structural process of the dynamic sequence of the gestation, production, development, fusion, and extinction of different media in the entire media system, as well as the associative architecture state

of competition, interaction, and symbiosis among different media.<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of media evolution, the entry of image language into media communication is also a manifestation of evolution. The involvement of image language in media communication reflects the development and renewal of media communication. The following analyzes the function of image language from three angles.

## **II. CROSS-LINGUISTIC FEATURE OF IMAGE LANGUAGE**

The cross-linguistic nature of image language refers to the ineffective or even deviation of information transmission due to improper use of language in the process of news reports. Through the use of image language, misunderstanding of information caused by language can be avoided. Generally speaking, there are two situations in which language misinterprets information. One is that ambiguous words are used in the process of using the same language, and the other is that there are problems with the translation of words when using different languages. Both of these situations will lead to misunderstanding of the dissemination information, and because the image language has no phonetic, vocabulary, and grammatical constraints in the language, it can cross languages and transmit news events truthfully and effectively.

With the emergence of the viewpoint of "media evolution", image language has also been involved in the process of communication. In the process of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic dissemination, replacing part of the original dissemination by image language can greatly reduce the ambiguity and misunderstanding caused by the language, and also reduce the misunderstanding of the dissemination content. The use of image language for dissemination can effectively avoid some religious, political, and cultural misunderstandings caused by traditional language dissemination, improve the effectiveness of dissemination, and reduce various problems in dissemination. The eye is the most basic organ of a person. The images seen through the eyes can transmit information to people most directly, and there is no secondary processing and creation process in the entire transmission process. What images bring to people is the most superficial and original reading content. Because of its simplicity and directness, it can eliminate language barriers and cultural differences in different countries, making images a common communication symbol. Image language can promote the authenticity and effectiveness of international communication and cross-cultural

communication. In addition, image language also has a corrective effect. In the process of using language, people will describe some events inaccurately, especially numbers, such as: many, some, a little, a large number, minority, extra-large, etc. Such use of vocabulary will cause great distress to the audience, which is mainly reflected in its inaccuracy. But image language can correct these approximate ranges, including statistics, graphs, etc., and correct fuzzy concepts through precise image language. For example, the snow disaster in China in 2008 was defined as "an extra-large snow disaster" in words, and the snowfall and the local disaster situation were described with numbers. As non-frontline personnel, most readers can't personally experience this scene. In terms of their understanding of the event, they tend to move towards the extreme directions of "excessively severe snow disaster" and "thinking that snow disaster is a minor matter", which affects social stability. By publishing pictures, tables, statistics, etc., readers can intuitively and accurately feel the local situation and avoid extreme speeches. Another example is when the Corona Virus Disease broke out in 2019, different countries used different languages to report on emergencies, which inevitably involved the number of infections, the number of people cured, the number of deaths, etc. When these data are disseminated through language, there is no way to be precise, and it is difficult for people to understand its development momentum. But through charts, data, images, etc., the previously blurred concepts can be corrected. Relatively speaking, there is no way to achieve the most accurate transmission of text and language. Image language can most effectively and intuitively correct text and language through data, pie charts, and graphs. Different languages have different ways of expressing quantity and degree. Different ways of expression will make the audience have doubts about the true situation of the dissemination content. The intervention of image language can effectively correct the differences in broadcast data in different languages.<sup>2</sup>

## **III. INTERACTIVITY OF IMAGE LANGUAGE**

The interactivity of an image refers to two aspects of interaction, one is the communication and interaction between the people involved in the image, and the other is the communication and interaction between the image content and the audience. For image language, internal interaction and external interaction should be achieved, which is mainly reflected in distance relationship and field of shooting scale relationship. In addition to the ability of image language to express its internal relationship, it is more important to build a special

<sup>1</sup> Zhou Xiang, Han Weizheng, "Using Image Social Media to Enhance China's International Communication Power" [J]. *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou*, 2017 (3): 166-172.

<sup>2</sup> Xiong Feng "A Brief Analysis of 'Image' Language in News Reports" [J]. *News Research Guide*, 2016 (2): 52.

relationship between the audience and the image, that is, the interactivity between them. This kind of interaction is embodied in the relationship of distance and field of shooting scale. From the perspective of distance relationship, interactivity refers to the distance between the characters appearing in news reports and the distance between the characters in the image and the audience. Different distances will produce different interactive experiences. Edward Twitchell Hall Jr. divided the relationship of humans use distance into four types: (1) intimate, (2) personal, (3) social, and (4) public.<sup>3</sup> "Intimate distance" refers to the distance from a person's skin to eighteen inches, which is approximately 45 cm. This distance is mostly the distance between lovers or relatives, but in public or between strangers, this distance will be considered rude and disrespectful behavior. In news reports, such a distance appears more often in the relationship between characters in the image, and can reflect the interactivity of the characters in the image. There may be two situations, one is a lover or a relative and the other is a stranger. For the latter, such a distance can make the audience feel dangerous, rude, and disrespectful, allowing the audience to interact with the image. "Personal distance" is about 18 inches to 4 feet, about 120 cm, about the length of an adult's arm. This kind of distance is more the distance between friends, relatively far away to relatives and lovers, while adding certain privacy. Through the distance in the image, the audience can clearly understand the relationship between the characters in the image, so that the news will not be misunderstood in the process of dissemination. "Social distance" is about 4 feet to 12 feet long, about 360 cm. This kind of distance is generally regarded as the distance of public social places. Generally, the number of attendees will be more than three people. If it is less than three people, it will appear inappropriate. "Public distance" refers to a distance from 12 feet to 25 feet or more, approximately 760 cm or more. This kind of distance mostly occurs when public figures appear. It is usually the distance between public figures and ordinary citizens. And leaders often use public distance when speaking in news reports. For images in news reports, it is necessary to convey real information to the audience, and at the same time, the audience needs to interact with the image psychologically, so it is necessary to choose a relatively suitable distance between the characters in the image. At the same time, the distance between the image and the audience should be relatively appropriate, so that the spread of news reports can achieve the desired effect. From the perspective of the relationship between field of shooting scale, the interactivity is generally

reflected in three aspects: panorama, close shot and close-up. The panorama and the distant view are similar, and can accommodate the entire body of the character, with the head close to the top of the frame and feet close to the bottom of the frame. When the images in news reports appear in a panoramic situation, the interactivity between the image language and the audience is a state without a sense of participation, because the entire image is relatively broad and empty. Such images can allow the audience to judge news reports from an objective perspective. Most of the images that people see that do not have subjective colors and objectively present the original news mostly use distant or panoramic scenes. Close shots and medium shots are roughly the same. They can be used as illustrative images and dialogue images, with images of two and three people in the majority. The appearance of such a field of shooting scale in news reports will make the audience have a stronger sense of participation, and it will shorten the distance between the audience and the event both spatially and psychologically. Generally, such images will bring a strong sense of identity and shock. Close-ups often focus on small objects, mostly human faces, which will strongly enhance the importance of the event and carry a certain symbolic meaning. In news reports, close-ups often appear in orders for arrest or illegal and criminal activities, usually when people or things that cause greater harm to society appear, causing audiences to interact with the media to generate psychological mood of condemnation.

#### **IV. REPRODUCIBILITY OF IMAGE LANGUAGE**

The reproducibility of the image language means that the image is different from the language and text of the traditional media, and the image will not undergo secondary processing or secondary creation during the transmission process. The image language simply restores and reproduces the facts, which is difficult for the language and text in traditional media to achieve. In terms of content, news reports provide the facts and truths of news events, only restoring the original appearance of the events to the audience, and the audiences excavate the deep meaning behind the events. In terms of purpose, news reports focus on the dissemination of information, satisfying the audience's thirst for knowledge and arousing public opinion at the same time. Under such conditions, there are higher requirements for the authenticity and completeness of news reports. From the perspective of expression, news reports are mainly narrative, with a clear statement of people, places, times, events, and reasons. The accuracy of the content of the report has become the top priority of news reports, so the reproducibility of the image language is particularly important. Surveillance video released by the police

<sup>3</sup> Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, 11e [M]. Beijing Allied Publications, 2017: 72.

through MicroBlog played an important role in the detection of the explosion at the China Construction Bank branch on Xiongchu Street in Wuhan that shocked China. On the morning of December 4, 2011, the official MicroBlog "Ping An Wuhan" of the Wuhan Municipal Public Security Bureau of Hubei Province released three screenshots of the suspects in the surveillance video, calling for clues to solve the case, and netizens responded enthusiastically. Later, "Ping An Wuhan" released the entire surveillance video. Some netizens immediately reported to the police after watching the video: they knew the motorcycle driven by the suspect. On December 5, "Ping An Wuhan" further released more accurate information, and announced clear frontal photos and physical characteristics of the suspect. In the end, a nurse from Wuhan General Hospital of Guangzhou Military Region recognized the suspect in the hospital. The key to the successful cracking of this important case is the image accuracy of MicroBlog news images.<sup>4</sup> Only by reproducing an image completely can the information be accurately conveyed to the audience. News images can condense news events into pictures or frames, and integrate the main ideas of the disseminator through images and then pass them to the audience. In this process, image language is more to reproduce news facts in a more intuitive way. The news images can provide more details to the audience during the reproduction process. In the traditional language and text communication process, it is difficult to accurately reproduce the full picture of the facts. However, news images shorten the distance between the audience and the facts, increase the sense of participation and make the image language reproduce the fact more accurately. Especially, some images can make the audience feel empathy. Some emotional news events will shift the emotional tone of the news event due to the words, intonation, and rhetoric of the host or speaker. At this time, the reproduction function of image language plays an important role. Images can put the event in front of the audience without any tendency, and the audience can judge the emotional changes brought about by the news event. Such a trendless reproduction is easier to be accepted by the audience. The most important point in news reports is to ensure the objectivity and authenticity of news images. Journalists should put reproducibility in the first place in the process of collecting and editing news images. The current society has entered a fast-paced era, whether it is the rise of converged media or the development of self-media, it is very fast. News reports that people are interested in are becoming more and more

<sup>4</sup> Ning Hailin, "The Basic Nature of News Images from the Perspective of Semiotics" [J]. *Journal of Northwest University*, 2014 (1): 146-150.

unique. Under such conditions, every journalist must capture the most shocking moments while maintaining reproducibility. One of the most important points in maintaining the reproducibility of news reports is to avoid staged photography. The so-called staged photography means that in order to achieve a certain communication effect, the journalist creates the required environment, designs a fixed plot, and allows the characters photographed and the subject photographed to perform according to the established thinking of the journalist. The journalist creates some illusions through such false image communication. Some images may only be slightly polished and some images may even be contrary to real events. In addition to staged photography, there is another shooting method which ignores the psychology of the parties involved and forcibly shoots the parties involved for the purpose of communication. For example, in June 2004, after the death of Chinese worker Zheng Mingwen in a terrorist attack in Afghanistan, many journalists at that time, despite the opposition of his family, forcibly interviewed his 88-year-old mother with the help of local officials. And as these journalists wished, they obtained the picture with the old mother weeping bitterly after she learned the truth in a seemingly objective way of recording the facts. This shooting method is called invisible staged photography.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the images in news reports must be a record of the facts that are happening at this moment. The purpose is to give the audience a sense of "liveness" without too much modification, and spread the event itself to the audience intact. The narration perspective of a journalist should not be the first perspective, but should pass the image to the audience through the third perspective. In addition to real images taken by journalists, news images also appear in the form of news cartoons. There are some past news events or events that journalists have no way of being on the scene, and can only be reproduced through news cartoons. Although they are news cartoons, they should be distinguished from the expression methods in artistic creation. They should also restore the truth of things, and restore the truth of the incident sharply.

## V. CONCLUSION

In today's "media evolution", image language has undoubtedly entered the field of mass communication, and at the same time has played a pivotal role in the dissemination of news reports. Because of the involvement of image language, the authenticity of news events has been greatly

<sup>5</sup> Yu Lirong, "'Picture Reality', 'Media Reality' and 'Macro Reality' — A Brief Analysis on the Hidden Inaccuracy of News Image Dissemination and Its Countermeasures" [J]. *Theoretical Exploration*, 2007 (1): 54-55.

improved. The cross-linguistic feature of image language in news reports can be unaffected by language in news reports, and can effectively convey real and effective information. Interactivity allows the audience to communicate with the event most directly and effectively. Reproducibility allows the event to be presented to the audience in the most authentic way without too much modification. In the context of the transformation of traditional media to Convergence Media and We-Media, fast-paced life and news reports also follow. The dissemination of news images has become more and more important, which can disseminate news to audiences faster, more effectively, and more truthfully. Therefore, the function of news images should also be paid attention to by academia. This paper briefly analyzes the function of image language in news reports, hoping to provide a theoretical reference for image language theory.

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