

Construction of the Chinese Dream in the National Publicity Film *China Enters the New Era*: The Perspective of Multimodal Metaphor and Metonymy

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ABSTRACT

"Chinese Dream" is a hot issue in the academic circle. Through the perspective of multimodal metaphor and metonymy to interpret the multimodal discourse: the national publicity film *China Enters the New Era*, the article showed that the publicity film had constructed its theme from six Chinese dreams: a dream of talents, a dream of a manufacturing power and an innovative country, a dream of sustained and healthy economic development, a dream of national strength and people's prosperity, a dream of a strong military army, and a dream of national rejuvenation. In the limited time and space of the publicity film, the six dreams highlighted the theme: the economic development, the people life and the army building in China have entered a new era.

Keywords: *Multimodality, Metaphor, Metonymy, Chinese dream.*

1. INTRODUCTION

After President Xi Jinping formally described the Chinese dream for the first time while visiting the exhibition *The Road to Rejuvenation* at the National Museum on Nov 29, 2012, he has expounded it on many occasions in the past eight years. In his report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi pointed out that the core goals of the Chinese dream were national prosperity, national rejuvenation, and people's happiness. During this historic event, a new national publicity film *China Enters the New Era* was released at the People's Daily, in which different people described their Chinese dreams. In recent years, scholars have studied the Chinese dream from different angles. However, there are only a few articles about the Chinese dream from the multimodal perspective. In the multimedia age, various fields attach great importance to the multimodal theory, deepen its theoretical research and expand its application scope. Therefore, there is a lot of space to study the Chinese dream from a multimodal perspective. This article attempts to analyze the Chinese dream presented in the film *China Enters the New Era* from the perspective of multimodal metaphor and metonymy, hoping to

provide some enlightments for the study of Chinese dream in the future.

2. MULTIMODAL METAPHOR AND METONYMY

Multimodal metaphor and metonymy have become new topics in the field of linguistics in recent years, due to the lack of in-depth study of metaphor and metonymy within the scope of pure linguistics from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. As multiple modes have played an increasingly important role in communication, the multimodal discourse has become a research trend with the cross-disciplinary development. Therefore, a comprehensive study of metaphor and metonymy not only includes verbal mode, but also covers non-verbal modes, such as image, sound, action etc., namely multimodal metaphor and metonymy. Many experts at home and abroad are engaged in this research, among whom is Forceville, the main representative. He defined multimodal metaphor as "metaphors whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes [1]." He also related the modality to human beings' five senses, dividing the modality into five types: visual (picture) modality, auditory

(sound wave) modality, tactile modality, olfactory modality and gustatory modality [2]. Different from metaphor in words, multimodal metaphor has the characteristics of dynamic narration, freshness and the universality of mapping. While studying multimodal metaphor, Forceville also noticed the important role of metonymy and the relationship between metaphor and metonymy. There is no specific definition of multimodal metonymy in the academic circle. With reference to the definitions of metaphor and multimodal metaphor, multimodal metonymy can be defined as the source constructing meaning with two or more modes, one of which is the verbal mode in most cases, then triggering the target within the same cognitive domain. Compared with multimodal metaphor, there are fewer studies on multimodal metonymy. According to Waugh's research on spoken and body languages, metonymy must exist regardless of the existence of metaphor, and metonymy was the premise for metaphor to construct meaning [3]. This discovery shows that multimodal metaphor and multimodal metonymy are closely related. Multimodal metonymy expands and enriches the meaning of multimodal metaphor, making the abstract metaphors in the target domain concrete, and helping its recognition and interpretation. At the same time, they are cultural. Different cultures influence people's cognition of the world and form different thinking modes, which permeate the metaphorical and metonymic thinking process. Therefore, the interpretation of multimodal metaphor and metonymy should be carried out in conjunction with a specific cultural or social context. But there is a difference between them: metaphor maps across domains based on their similarity, while metonymy maps within the same domain based on the adjacency [4].

3. MULTIMODAL METAPHOR AND METONYMY OF CHINESE DREAM IN THE FILM

The publicity film *China Enters the New Era* presents the Chinese dreams of six representatives of the masses, of a foreigner working in China, and of President Xi Jinping. They are different in ages, genders, ethnicities, and industries in China. It illustrates the theme of China entering a new era through the scenes of their daily life or work. Metaphor has an explanatory function, which can build a bridge between the source and the target, establish a connection between their similarities, accelerate the cognitive process of the audience, and help them understand and accept the meaning.

With the help of multi-modal metaphor via multiple senses, the meaning conveyed by a certain modal metaphor sometimes cannot be completely conveyed by other modal metaphors, so multi-modal metaphor can influence the audience more than abstract language signs and trigger their emotion [5]. Metonymy has a representational function as well as the discourse function of coherence and cohesion, which can link and integrate various human concepts within an overall framework. Compared with the text mode, the dynamic image has a thousand times more influence, which immediately stimulates the audience's process of shifting from thinking to feeling, from intuition to feeling [6]. The film used various symbolic modes such as texts, images, narration and music to shape the national image and national spirit of China in the new era based on the cognitive framework of metaphor and metonymy. Compared with the previous publicity discourses and publicity methods, this film made the publicity of the national image more approachable and achieved better communication results through multimodal structure and the mapping between metaphor and metonymy.

3.1 *Dream of Growing Up and Becoming Talents*

The first person in the publicity film was Ci Yang Lamu from Yangtze River Source Village, Golmud City, Qinghai Province. She was 6 years old. Facing the open and peaceful water — the main source of the Yangtze River, she spoke out her Chinese dream, "I want to go to Beijing and visit Tiananmen Square after I grow up." The film used the "Tibetan costumes" of the little girl to show her minority identity by means of metonymy, and used the source — the little girl wearing Tibetan costumes to mean children from different ethnic groups via the conceptual metonymy. They are flowers of the motherland, which means children are the future of the country by the conceptual metaphor. The Yangtze River, the cradle of the Chinese nation, is the longest river in China, nurturing millions of Chinese people. So the source "Yangtze River Source Village" means "country" by the conceptual metonymy. In Chinese culture, water has the connotation of "slow and steady wins the race", just as Lao Tzu mentioned in *Tao Te Jing*: "The greatest virtue is like water"; "The goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousand creatures; yet itself does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain." It is this that makes water so near to the Way." This

metaphor refers to the right way of being a person, that is, being a person should be like water, which nourishes but never competes with all things. This kind of character is closest to the core of Taoism. The water has nine virtues, because it is constantly flowing, and it can benefit all living things, as if it has the virtue of goodness; the water always flows down with different forms and never flows reversibly and it must comply with the rule, as if it has the virtue of righteousness; the water is vast and endless, as if it has the virtue of the way; the water runs through mountains without any fear, as if it has the virtue of bravery; the water exists without unevenness, as if it has the virtue of methodism; the amount of water can be much or less without scraping, as if it has the virtue of uprightness; the water can pervade any place, as if it has the virtue of discernment; the water must come from the west, as if it has the virtue of determination; everything is washed and becomes clean with water, as if it has the virtue of changing [7].

Tiananmen Square is the holy place in the hearts of people of all ethnic groups across the country, and the heart of China. The publicity film used the subevent that visiting Tiananmen Square is the dream of minority children to metonymically describe the complex event that China is a united and cohesive country. When the girl introduced herself, the background music was soft, soothing, and quiet. When she spoke her dream, the background music became cheerful with the increased rhythm. Through the combination of narration, images, texts and background music, it metaphorically depicts Chinese children as virtuous, righteous, moral, courageous, ambitious, upright, discerning, and tolerant social talents. It also metaphorically indicates that China has the virtues of water, benefiting other countries, but never seeking hegemony.

3.2 Dream of a Manufacturing Power and an Innovative Country

The second person in the publicity film was Xie Yuanli, a welding manipulator of China CNR Co., Ltd.. Towards the rising sun, he walked in the high-speed train production workshop and introduced himself with his back to the audience. Accompanied by his daily work scene and the scene of *Fuxing* high-speed train running on the track, he said that his Chinese dream was to "make our high-speed train faster, more stable, and safer, connecting the world and benefiting mankind." The third person in the publicity film was Guo Bozhi,

director of COMAC Shanghai Aircraft Design and Research Institute. He introduced himself while stroking the C919 aircraft. His Chinese dream was to "design and produce commercial aircrafts in China which the airlines are willing to buy, which pilots are willing to fly, and which passengers are willing to board." The matching scenes were the C919 aircraft preparing for the test flight, the rapidly rotating propeller and the C919 aircraft in flight.

Two individual entities "a welding manipulator" and "a director of design and research institute" stand for the collection, metonymizing "the vast number of blue-collar workers in China" and "technical intellectuals" respectively. The rising sun heralds a new day and a new beginning, metaphorizing the concept "the high-speed rail manufacturing is ushering in new opportunities and new developments." The *Fuxing* EMU is an EMU train that integrates a large amount of modern high-tech with fully independent intellectual property rights, and reaches the world's advanced level. It has become the business card of China's manufacturing industry to shine in the world. The film used high-speed trains to metonymically imply "the high-speed rail manufacturing industry is in a stage of rapid development." The C919 aircraft is China's first mainline civil aircraft with independent intellectual property rights in accordance with the latest international airworthiness standards. It can compete with Boeing, Airbus, and Ilyushin aircraft in the commercial field. The film used "the successful test flight of the C919 aircraft" to metonymically imply "the rise of China's aircraft industry and the dream of her commercial aviation in the world", and used "fast-rotating propellers" to metonymically imply "the flourishing development of the aircraft industry". During this process, the film used two subevents of "*Fuxing* high-speed train" and "successful test flight of C919 aircraft" to metonymically imply the complex event of China's entry into a new era of "manufacturing power" and "innovative country". In order to highlight this, the rhythm of the background music had accelerated and became more exciting.

3.3 Dream of Sustainable and Healthy Development

The fourth person in the film was the American Ji Kuisheng, the CEO of Lufax Holding Ltd. His Chinese dream was that China could maintain a relatively good development. When he spoke out

his Chinese dream, the background scenes were he walking vigorously in a circular corridor in a luxurious and majestic building, instructing employees to work, reading by himself, and being interviewed in the office with Shanghai's *Oriental Pearl Tower* in the back. The publicity film used the source "CEO of a financial institution" — the individual entity to metonymically imply the collection "foreigners working in China", and used the subevent of "reading" to metonymically imply the complex event of "China's financial industry being constantly learning, deepening reforms and innovations, responding to the rapidly developing financial market and having comprehensively improved the quality and level of serving the real economy, and promoted China's sustained and healthy development." The film used spacial parts "Shanghai building, Oriental Pearl Tower" to imply the spacial whole "modern and internationalized Chinese cities" by means of metonymy, highlighting the healthy and prosperous development of Chinese cities. In order to enhance the effect, the background music had a lively rhythm and a melodious tune.

3.4 Dream of Building a Strong Country with Well-off People

The next characters were Li Xujun, an employee of Peony Group Ltd., and Chen Zeshen, a villager from Dawan Village, Huashi Town, Jinzhai County, Anhui Province. As a member of the Communist Party of China, Li Xujun's Chinese dream was the motherland getting stronger and people being happier. While the latter's Chinese dream was the poor people getting rid of poverty and leading a good life. The corresponding scenes were Li Xujun's leisurely life after work and Chen Zeshen's daily life. The publicity film used the individual entities "a company employees" and "a villager" to metonymically refer to the collections "Chinese party members and ordinary people" and "Chinese poor households" respectively. The film used this subevent of Li Xujun's leisurely life after work, such as buying vegetables, watering flowers, talking with foreigners, walking in the park, and drinking tea on the street, to refer to the complex events of "the ordinary people in the new era leading a prosperous life" and "a good economic and social environment attracting foreigners to travel, work and settle down in China" respectively by means of metonymy. From Chen Zeshen's daily life, the audience can see villagers' well-planned houses, neat village roads, herds of livestock, rolling mountains and forests. Through these

scenes, the film metonymically implies that remote villages have become ecologically livable places with civilized rural customs where the villagers live and work in peace and contentment, which is the result of the construction of a new socialist countryside in the new era, and also the dream and pursuit of achieving a well-off life in an all-round way.

3.5 Dream of a Strong Army

The seventh person appearing in the publicity film was Li Qiang, the deputy political commissar of the guard of honour of the People's Liberation Army. His Chinese dream was to contribute his own strength to the goal of achieving a strong army by committing to the cause of the guard of honour based on his own post. The audience can see the scene of the guard of honor in training. The film used the source "deputy political commissar of the guard of honor" this individual entity to refer to the collection "Chinese soldiers" by means of metonymy, and metonymically indicated their identity through the clothing of the trainees-military uniforms. During training, the guard of honour lined up neatly with all the members holding their heads high with full spirits. When marching, everyone had a firm vision and vigorous pace, showing the spirit of Chinese soldiers. The publicity film used the subevent of "the performance of the team members in training" to metonymically indicate the complex event "China is building a world-class army." In order to match this scene and script, the rhythm of the background music had been accelerating, and the tune had become more and more vigorous.

3.6 Dream of National Rejuvenation

The last one in the film was Xi Jinping, the general secretary of the Communist Party of China. He called on people of the whole country to struggle continuously to achieve the decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, to win the great victory of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, to realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and to satisfy people's yearning for a better life! He is the representative of the party, the government and the country. The scenes that appeared in the film were Secretary Xi Jinping's report at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the smiling faces of the seven characters in the publicity film, the Great Wall walking through the mountains, and the back

figures of the seven characters walking forward. The film used the individual entity "general secretary" to metonymically refer to the collection "party, government, and country". The seven characters looked at the camera with firm eyes and happy smiles, which can shorten the distance between the participants of the film and the audience, making the audience identify with the participants and improve their recognition and acceptance of the behaviors of the participants. The film used smiling faces to metaphorize the confidence and expectations of people of different ages, genders, ethnicities, and industries in China's construction of a comprehensive well-off society and the realization of the dream of national rejuvenation. The Great Wall, a miracle created by Chinese people in the ancient times, is known as the "Monument of Human Civilization" and one of the Seven Wonders of the Middle Ages in the world. It is a typical symbol of Chinese culture, which metaphorizes this concept that "China has a long history and profound Chinese culture." In the new era of building a well-off society in an all-round way, of winning the great victory of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and of realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the publicity film used the Great Wall as a metaphor to imply that "The Chinese people will rely on their unity, wisdom and strength to overcome various challenges, difficulties and resistance, and realize the dream of a comprehensive well-off society. China, the great nation, will become powerful again." The back shots of the seven characters who were constantly moving forward indicate by means of conceptual metaphor that all walks of life in China forge ahead and make continuous progress. At the same time, it also implies that Chinese people are building a well-off society in an all-round way, and deepening socialism with Chinese characteristics in a new era, on the road to great victory, national rejuvenation and a better life. They stood firmly and held their heads high, indicating that they had entered a new era, which echoed the theme. At this stage, with the sonorous voice of the General Secretary, the background music had a fast rhythm with a strong tune, making the audience intuitively feel China's strong confidence and power to realize the dream of national rejuvenation.

4. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHINESE DREAM IN CHINA ENTERS THE NEW ERA

The six Chinese dreams shown in the publicity film are linked together and complement each other. The first Chinese dream is the cornerstone of the realization of the next Chinese dream, and the realization of the next Chinese dream creates favorable conditions for the realization of the first Chinese dream, and the like. The dream of growing up and becoming talents can offer a large number of talents for the country, then talents are the basis for realizing the dream of a manufacturing power and an innovative country. With the rapid development of innovation and manufacturing, sustainable and healthy economic development can be achieved in today's international environment, while healthy and sustainable development can provide the material foundation for the country's prosperity, people's happiness, and the harmony and stability of the society. Only then can we realize the dream of a strong military and finally realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation.

In order to achieve the purpose of communication, *China Enters the New Era* used various symbolic modes to jointly achieve its goal. Behind these symbols are metaphors, metonymies, and their interactions, which promote the development of the discourse and ultimately convey this message to the audience: China has entered a new era. Metaphor and metonymy enable the audience to understand abstract concepts and events through concrete things or events, but they have different textual functions. Metaphor mainly plays the role of argumentation, explanation, persuasion, and generalization of the discourse theme. Metonymy is not only a reminder of metaphor, but also a kind of reasoning mechanism, a narrative means and the organization principle of the discourse [8]. In the discourse of *China Enters the New Era*, metaphor and metonymy interact with each other and form a conceptual system to achieve its clear communication purpose: It shows that China has entered a more open and prosperous new era of development through the display of the Chinese dreams.

Metaphor and metonymy are not only rhetorical devices, but also cognitive ways rooted in our thinking. Life experience and knowledge of human beings are the bases of this cognitive style. Due to the similar physiological basis and cognitive experience of human beings, there are great similarities in the ways of expression of metaphor

and metonymy chosen by different nationalities. Multi-modal metaphor and metonymy also follow this cognitive-experiential feature in the process of meaning construction. But this cognitive experience is the result of human interaction with the surrounding material and cultural world. Therefore, on the one hand, multi-modal metaphor and metonymy have cognitive universality, but on the other hand, they also show typical national cultural characteristics. Forceville once pointed out that the mapping in multimodal metaphor was not only experiential, but also cultural [9]. The process of meaning construction of multimodal metaphor and metonymy in *China Enters the New Era* embodies the unique national culture of China. It contains rich Chinese culture with the metaphor of "water" and "Great Wall", as well as the metonymic patterns of material domain, behavioral event process domain and spatial domain. Only by understanding the Chinese cultural background can the audience really understand the profound cultural connotation contained in these multi-modal metaphors and metonymies.

5. CONCLUSION

From a cognitive perspective, this article interpreted the six Chinese dreams presented in the national publicity film *China Enters the New Era* based on the theoretical framework of multimodal metaphor and metonymy, which further confirmed the following. First, metaphor and metonymy are basic human cognitive mechanisms, which not only widely exist in the verbal mode, but also exist in non-verbal modes such as images, sounds, and actions. Second, multimodal metaphor and metonymy each inherit the characteristics of metaphor and metonymy. They bear the characteristics of culture, which should be understood in combination with the culture and context. Third, as a cognitive method, the interpretation of metaphor is generally based on metonymy, and metonymy is basic and can be independent of metaphor. *China Enters the New Era* used the metonymy mechanism of material domain, behavioral event process domain and spatial domain and combined the symbolic meaning of metonymy to further extend the meaning of metaphors, presenting China's economic development, people's lives and army construction have entered a new era in the limited time and space (3-minute publicity film).

However, there are still some problems in the metaphors of *China Enters the New Era*, that is, the

metaphors are constructed from self perspective. For example, the metaphor of "water" may not be understood by the audience in other countries although it is profound and contains rich Chinese culture, which will lead to the deviation of interpretation and decoding and will not achieve the best communication effect. Therefore, although this publicity film breaks through the traditional stereotyped publicity through multi-modal metaphor and metonymy, there is still a problem of using the rhetorics to convey the meaning from self perspective. In the publicity and construction of the image of the country, we should skillfully use multi-modal metaphor and metonymy from the perspective of the audience to open up and expand the meaning of common, and avoid the phenomenon of "communication but not being understood", so that we can construct the Chinese image in the new era better among foreign audience and achieve the best dissemination effect.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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