The Multimodal Analysis of *War And Peace*

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Abstract: *War And Peace*, originally a most praised and studied masterpiece in the history of Western Literature, nowadays represents a literary-artistic phenomena far more than the text composed by Tolstoy. Utilising the multimodal discourse analysis, now the mainstream of deconstruction method of contemporary linguistics and semiotics research, this thesis analyses the translations and multimedia adaptions to cover the shortages of previous text studies and simultaneously analyses the application of multimodal discourse in the adaptation and dissemination of literary works in a two-way perspective.

Keywords: *War And Peace*; Multimodal discourse analysis; Multimodal use of literary works

Introduction

War And Peace by Tolstoy is considered a monumental work of world literature classics. Tolstoy creates over 500 characters in this novel, praises the Russian people's patriotic spirit and national identity against Napoleon's invasion, and introspects how individuals and human community make decisions in the face of history and destiny. Due to the authority and influence of the original text, the existing researches are mainly literary, deriving into philosophical and artistic aspect. In the former field, Freud school is committed to deconstructing *War And Peace* from the perspective of psychological analysis, thus Vygotsky (1974) [1] and Woolf (1978)[2] agree that the dreams described in the book implicates the reaction of social reality. Meanwhile scholars are more inclined to linguistic analysis for exploring the artistic attainments: Lotman argues the spatial simulative function of textual construction is fully used in the novel embodying as the novelistic ideas of the open form and the decentralization (朱婷婷，2013)[3]. The scholar points that this technique which does not stick to the general narrative pattern makes the text surpass the bondage of time logic. It's not easy to describe such a magnificent picture through the text; meanwhile with the development of multimedia, the novel also derives many adapted versions. Based on this idea, researchers begin to analyse *War And Peace* from the perspective out of literature itself.

It is not new-fangled to apply linguistic theories to semiotics, especially visual symbols research. Halliday (1971)[4] was the first who attempted to deconstruct specific literary texts by using linguistic property analysis. As a new force in the field of linguistic research, multimodal analysis describes communication practices in terms of the textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual resources and modes used to compose messages (Kress, 2009)[5]. Based on the multimodality theory, multimodal discourse analysis is an approach to discourse which focuses on how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication more than language itself. With the development of technology and multimedia, the research objects also extend from language to music, images, vision designs and other social symbol systems (Halliday, 1798)[6]. On this basis, there are 3 most effective research methods: Visual Grammar, Auditic Grammar and Reading Image (Kress& van Leeuwen, 1996)[7]. In fact, many productions of the modern media industry are following these methods, using more modal elements to add information in order to enrich the text. Keeping in step with the times, a plenty of classic literary works have been revived through multimodal deduction; and *War And Peace*, an epitome of a society and an era, is a typical example.

Nowadays, with the adaptations in various multimodal forms, *War And Peace* represents not only the original text created by Tolstoy, but also a literary and artistic phenomena and characterization group with complicated features. To discusses the application of multimodal discourse in *War And Peace* adaptations and the corresponding perceived effect of the audience, there follows analysis on 3 categories according to their presentation forms: translated texts, film works, and stage performances.

1. Analysis on Translated Texts

In view of the originality of a literary work, the adaptation of its translated versions in literary modality cannot be ignored to discuss. English is one of the most popular translations. Tolstoy originally used a lot of French in dialogues between nobles to subtly hint at the characters' moods and personalities. However, Maude (1992)[8], a most widely recognized translation, directly lines the English translation instead of the French dialogues. In terms of meaning construction, this version obviously causes information loss. However, in order to make up the English readers' confusion of Russian culture and the complex genealogy, the translator complements information by Pre-text Contents which includes introduction, bibliography, chronology, personages and even the maps. For Tolstoy's hyperspace narrative, the maps, in form of a detailed and accurate picture mode, are helpful to explain the location where the story happens, and give the readers more intuitive information that beneficial to link up the inner logic and development process of the story.

There are many versions of translated *War And Peace* in China as well. The Chinese versions are quite consistent with the French parts; they all choose to mark the words in different fonts after translating into Chinese. Chinese versions mainly concern the

mismatch between target language and source language. Chinese and Russian are from two independent language families, and their cultural backgrounds are also totally different. It is inevitable that some characteristic things cannot be easily displayed. As a result of cultural isolation, the literal translation of the original text is not enough to make the readers understand the cultural connotation behind the text, and the understanding of the main plot will be confused. The use of annotation is a solution to this problem indeed, and annotation itself is different from literary language, which is more like the nature of expository text. This solution is in fact consistent with the principle of footnote in the multimodal novel theory of Gibbons (2014)[9].

2. Analysis on Film Works

War And Peace is particularly suitable for screen art for its grand pattern, plentiful characters and meandering plots. Considering the characteristics of film and television works, the language of screen will be the focus.

The Soviet version is the highest praised one in all movie adaptations of *War And Peace*. Under Bondarchuk's director, the camera language of the movie is most attacking the audience from the visual mode. According to Nicotra (2018)[10], all the perception can be attributed to the symbols, the images are the graphic symbols, the sounds are the musical notes, the content, the theme and the thought of the film and television art are the are the signifiers of the sublimation of the images and the musical notes. The main colours of movies play a foundation role in rendering the style of emotions. In the selection of the main colour, the Soviet version has a very distinctive style: a combination of solemn and thick colours is used; in the war line colours with deep cold tone and low brightness appear mostly, while in the peace line more bright colours with higher saturation with a brilliant but soft tone in details which helps to avoid sharpening are used. In contrast, two contrasts between different lines are highlighted, which create two corresponding atmospheres for the audience. In the establishment of the main tone, there're often some punchlines on specifics. This version divided into four parts make full use of the visual modality, using sound to auxiliary the lens language, create the characters' psychology. The subtle processing gives the audience a lot of hint, which is complementary to the presentation of the main line.

Another famous movie adaptation is the movie directed by Vidor in 1956. Market factors causes many discrepancies from the original book besides the plot also changed a lot. The colour tone of the whole film is in high saturation, and the setting of the characters is also visible: Natasha's clothes are mostly in bright and vibrant colours, showing a very opposite aesthetic system from the Soviet version. It stereotypes the personal with a bit of assimilation tendency of the British and American culture. It is also a paradox that although the movie has the core of British and American culture, it still tries to supplement the cultural and linguistic differences between the original version and itself. In the plot of Pier's father's death, there are a bunch of characters of the Orthodox priests singing Russian Christian songs, which seems to be incompatible and eccentric because characters all speak in English. The director tries to convey Russian features by voice modality but eventually doesn't get the most natural effect. From the point of communicating information, the director's use of image and sound is sophisticated. He can strongly outline the emotional tone with only a few symbols; but the processing of them, from detail, is rough. When the organization between symbols is deficient, the presentation of the overall modality is less satisfactory.

3. Analysis of Stage Performances

Stage performance has also been an important branch of multi-modal artistic forms, its history is far longer than that of film and television works. Among the stage adaptations of *War And Peace*, there are two cross the era and also have the representativeness of multimodal discourse: the opera created by Prokofiev and the musical *Natasha, Pier & The Great Comet of 1812* (Groban& Malloy, 2003)[11]. Image and voice are always two important ways of multimodal presentation, while stage performances not only focus on these two, but also add more developmental elements.

Prokofiev's opera is generally recognized as a classic and the form of opera performance is in line with the epic temperament of *War And Peace*. The interaction with the audience is designed out of the plane vision modality to extend the vision to a more complex dimension, not only to make the audience feel like experiencing personally on the scene, but also an artistic form of using multimodality to reconstruct the time and space. The musical version, different from the elegant and solemn opera, features rock and electronic dance music with Russian folk songs. This bold and innovative music style helps to mix more voice symbols in, and also more suitable for young audiences to feel the emotional fluctuations of the roles.

The stage versions share common points to cancel the traditional concept of stage: with the megaphones installed in every direction and corner, the actors can appear around you in every corner holding various instruments in their hands. Before the performance starts, the musicians run to the audience, reading the discipline and matters needing attentions. These symbols touch more perception way of audience and close the distance between the performance and the appreciation, making the stage form attractive and refreshing.

4. Conclusion

Through the analysis above, it is not difficult to find a conclusion that visual design is the most widely used in the adaptation of literary works. Whether it is to complement the text in the form of pictures, or through color, lens logic, expression, and special stage design to achieve the transmission of information to the audience, the use of these visual symbols are the better interpretation of the signified outside the text.

The auditory grammar mainly conveys the transmission of literature by using the lines and dialogues of the characters, such as the dialogues between the characters, the confession in order to vindicate characters and the voice-over in order to push on the narration. Another form is the background music which used to render emotions and transit the paragraphs through. In most cases, the music breaking away from the text is not the main body to convey the important information, but the foiling role. It is undeniable; however, the music symbols make the presentation texture of auditic modality take a qualitative leap.

As for those transcend the multi-modal application of traditional cognition, increasing the interaction between information providers and information receivers is the main purpose.

5. Discussion

It is clear to draw a conclusion that, in the existing art forms, multimodality and its extensive use are far more than the study of linguistics and have been risen to the category of semiotics in practical significance. Nevertheless, the development prospect of multimodality is still immeasurable. From Eisenstein's Montage lens technology to today's film industry, the techniques of using camera language and editing methods to enrich text metaphors are more and more abundant; and the art form of enhancing interactive experience through multi-modal symbols is also becoming more mature. For illustration, 4D movies and immersive dramas are increasingly springing up as the new forms of dimension and multi-sensory. To be sure, multimodal discourse will not be limited to the existing symbol patterns but more splendid with the progress of science and technology. Even in the field of classical works that have undergone several successful adaptions, such as *War And Peace*, there are still infinite possibilities.

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