

A Multi-modal Discourse Analysis From the Perspective of Visual Grammar Theory:A Dog's Tale

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Abstract: With the theory of Visual Grammar Theory, including representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning, as the theoretical foundation, this paper delves into how the movie poster uses multi-modal discourse to promote the movie by analyzing the poster of the movie A Dog's Tale. The result shows that multi-modal discourse in the movie poster such as colors, picture and words, etc. constitutes a complete multi-modal movie poster. To analyze multi-modal discourse analysis in movie poster is to explore the characteristics of the movie using different modals to convey meanings and to extend the practical value of the theory of multi-modal discourse analysis in the movie poster, which is to attract public attention and realize the effect of promoting the movie.

Keywords: Visual Grammar Theory; Multi-modal discourse analysis; A Dog's Tale

Introduction

The information age has promoted the study of multi-modal discourse, and people can't communicate without the joint use of auditory, visual and tactile senses. At the same time, discourse is no longer embodied in the form of a single text, and multi-modal discourse, which is based on animation, sound, and tone, has begun to emerge. Multi-modal discourse is a phenomenon that emphasizes the use of visual, auditory, and tactile senses to communicate through a variety of symbols such as words, images, sounds, and movements (Zhang Delu 2009). Because multi-modal discourse is able to meet the needs of people's rich and colorful life, it is loved by more and more people. Multi-modal discourse is a kind of discourse that incorporates multiple modes of communication (such as sound, text, image, etc.) to convey information. Zhu Yongsheng mentions two for identifying multi-modal discourse: first, how many kinds of modalities are involved; second, how many symbol systems are involved. To put it simply, a multi-modal discourse is a discourse that involves multiple perceptions or is jointly encoded by two or more symbol systems to construct an overall meaning and convey information. Movies and literature are both works of art, but movies are more intuitive, more vivid and more understandable, because movies are a kind of audio-visual works, and also a kind of multi-modal discourse combining visual and auditory arts. This paper takes the movie poster of A Dog's Tale as the object, and uses the multi-modal discourse which, to explore how the multi-modal discourse is embodied in the movie poster.

1. Theoretical Framework

The meaning of multi-modal discourse is described in detail by Kress & Van Leeuwen. They point out that multi-modal discourse is a discourse structure in which the meaning of a discourse is formed by one or more of the linguistic symbols, such as image, language, color, and sound, which work together to form the meaning of the discourse. Li Zhanzi presents a different understanding of the meaning of multi-modal discourse from the perspective of social semiotics. According to him, multi-modal discourse is a composite discourse in which text is used in combination with images, diagrams, etc., or it can be understood as a text in which meaning is realized by any one of more than one kind of symbolic encoding. On the basis of Han Lide's Systemic Functional Grammar, Kress & Van Leeuwen established a comprehensive grammatical structure to multi-modal discourse, which is the famous Visual Grammar. As a result, visual grammar and systemic functional grammar in the social semiotic perspective have a close connection: the concepts of reproduced meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning in the theory of visual grammar correspond to the conceptual, interpersonal, and discourse in the theory of Han Lide's functional grammar, respectively.

A Dog's Tale is a heartwarming American movie, a true adaptation of a story that has made viewers around the world weep. The movie is undoubtedly one of the most iconic movies about the friendship between humans and dogs, with a 9.4 rating on Douban. Its greatest strength lies in the fact that the story itself is extremely compelling and has a natural tear-jerking effect. The dog named Hachi can't express his feelings like human beings, but he uses ten years of waiting to express his love and loyalty to his master, which vividly illustrates "it's just a dog for you, but you're its whole life". Movie posters, as a means of movie publicity, create momentum and publicity for the movie, and most importantly, it is a kind of interpretation of the movie, which can express the connotation and meaning of the movie through colors and images.

The design of the movie poster of A Dog's Tale, the presentation of the image and the matching of colors are unique. The text size is so different that each has its own prominence and focus. At the same time, the arrangement of the image position is also very prominent. Therefore, it is easy for the audience to grasp the key points, and the coordination and cooperation of each part constitutes a multi-modal discourse information, which provides a rich corpus for the analysis of the meaning of representation, interaction and composition.



2. Representational Meaning

Representational meaning refers to a variety of symbolic modalities to express the internal and external connections of different modalities through words, images, images, etc., and representational meaning can be divided into narrative reproduction and conceptual reproduction. Narrative reproduction refers to the implicit interaction process contained in the picture (mainly refers to the interaction between the creator and the audience) and the reproduction of the specific things contained in the picture, and the necessary connection and interaction between the two are generated through vectors, such as the gaze of the eyes, the pointing of the fingers, etc.; Conceptual renditions do not contain vectors.

As shown on the poster, the film's protagonists, Professor Parker and Hachi, occupy the vast majority of the page and are in the center of the poster, making it clear to the audience that the main players in the film are presented. In the poster, Professor Parker is holding Hachi, and they are looking at each other, which implies that Professor Parker and Hachi only have each other in their eyes. There are three main processes involved in this kind of gaze: verbal process, reaction process, and mental process. Judging from the poster where Professor Parker is holding Hachi, it seems that Professor Parker loves Hachi very much. However, in fact, if you look closely, Professor Parker is all of Hachi, so it is precisely the expression of Hachi's love. Clearly, this is a latent verbal process. In addition, there are light beams on the upper left and upper right around Professor Parker and Hachi, that is, vectors, which is a reaction process. Hachi's eyes also reflect his psychological process to a certain extent, Hachi looks at Professor Parker and implies that Hachi wants to see Professor Parker every day, which also lays the groundwork for Hachi to run to the station every day to wait for him after Professor Parker's death. Finally, from the point of view of the symbolic process, the background of the poster is almost dominated by warm yellow.

3. Interactive Meaning

Interactive meaning is based on the interpersonal meaning of the system function grammar, which is mainly reflected in the interpersonal function of the image. Based on the definition, we can know that this interaction between the author and the viewer in the meaning of interaction is realized through the information conveyed by the image, and this interaction leads the audience to have a correct value judgment about the person or thing. From the perspective of pragmatic meaning, interactive meaning is mainly realized through four ways: contact, social distance, attitude and modality.

First of all, contact refers to a kind of contact relationship constructed by the author and the participant on the basis of image

information, and a certain meaning generated by these contact relationships. Rather, there are “provide” and “request” classes for this kind of image information, and they are different from each other. In the poster, Professor Parker is holding Hachi, and they are looking at each other, which clearly provides the audience with an infographic that does not require any imagination, so this is a “provide” image. The eyes, expressions, and states of Professor Parker and Hachi in the poster also “provide” some information to the audience, attracting the audience’s attention. In addition, the text in the poster is the most direct message “provision”, conveying the message to the audience more directly. Furthermore, attitudes are expressed through the perspective of images. In this poster, the poster is designed with flat corners, which makes it easier for the viewer’s perspective to be parallel to the poster, thus reflecting the equal status of the author and the audience. This design method is easier for the audience to resonate, so that the audience unconsciously wants to understand the story of the protagonist, which is a good realization of the publicity effect of the movie.

4. Compositional meaning

The main message value in the movie poster of *A Dog’s Tale* is Professor Parker and Hachi, who occupy two-thirds of the poster, which is the most prominent message of the poster, indicating that Professor Parker and Hachi are the main participants in the film. The bold font on the right side of the poster indicates that the story is based on real events, and this line of words is easy to attract the audience’s attention and arouse the audience’s curiosity about the film. The yellow and bold font at the front of the poster is the title of the movie, and the font directly below the movie title highlights “the true story of a dog”. And, the font directly above the movie title clearly indicates the director of the movie, the upper left and upper right of the poster highlight the starring actor in bold red font, and the bottom line of text on the poster is the time when the movie is released, the ultimate purpose of the poster is to achieve the publicity effect, so that more audiences can watch the movie, and the audience must know the specific date of the movie’s release, so the date is an important part of the movie poster publicity.

5. Conclusion

Based on the three meanings in the theory of visual grammar, this paper analyzes the various modalities in the movie poster of *A Dog’s Tale*, and explores the different meanings expressed by the poster design using different colors, the size of the text, and the position of the image. In the process of analyzing the movie poster, we can clearly feel that the colors, images, and words in the poster are all set off against each other, and jointly construct the multi-modal discourse of the movie poster. The various modalities not only convey the key message of the movie poster, but also attract the attention of the audience, stimulate the audience’s enthusiasm for watching the movie, and finally, the poster successfully achieves the effect of promoting and promoting the film.

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