

A Study on Metaphorical Representations in English and Chinese High-Speed Rail Promotional Films

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Abstract: Multimodal discourse can display and convey information to the audience vividly through the interaction of text, image, voice and other modes, thus arousing emotional resonance and persuading the audience. As the important international negotiation discourse, China's high-speed rail promotional film, a three-dimensional and multimodal metaphorical discourse, plays a very important role in promoting products and establishing product image. Based on the multimodal metaphorical representation theory and Forceville's multimodal metaphor theory, this paper selects 11 English and Chinese high-speed rail promotional films for analysis, and discusses the basic representation types and modal configuration of multimodal metaphors, as well as the constructed overseas image and competitive advantages of China's high-speed rail, aiming to help China's high-speed rail go global.

1. Introduction

China's high-speed railway promotional film is a multimodal discourse that integrates language, voice and dynamic images. As the important international negotiation discourse, it plays a very important role in increasing the overseas awareness of products, helping China's high-speed rail go global and improving China's international image. Based on the multimodal metaphor representation theory and Forceville's multimodal metaphor theory, this paper analyzes 11 English and Chinese high-speed rail promotional films and classifies the types of metaphorical representation, in order to improve the readers' ability of reading multimodal metaphors, further improve the overseas image and competitive advantage of China high-speed rail, and help China high-speed rail go abroad.

2. Theoretical Framework and Related Studies

2.1 Multimodal Metaphor

Multimodal metaphor is the study of multimodal discourse from a cognitive perspective, and its main basis is conceptual metaphor. The theory of conceptual metaphor was first put forward by Lakoff & Johnson in *The Metaphors We Live By*. In their opinion, metaphor is a systematic mapping from a specific conceptual domain to an abstract conceptual domain^[1] and is a way of thinking and cognitive means^[2]. Previous studies on conceptual metaphor often take language as the priority mode^[3], which to some extent ignores the role of other ideographic symbols in the construction of metaphorical meaning. In view of this deficiency, Charles Forceville, a representative scholar of modal metaphor studies, is committed to extending the study of metaphor to various modes including images^[4], music^[5] and gestures^[6]. Thus, the concept of multimodal metaphor came into being.

2.2 Multimodal Metaphorical Representation

In recent years, the research objects of multimodal metaphor can be divided into two categories: one is static, such as comics, advertisements, posters, etc., most of which are limited to the discussion of text and image modes, such as Mo Huifang^[7], Ge Aihua^[8], Wu Ruiqin^[9], Zhan Xiaojuan^[10], and the other is based on the dynamic nature, such as various film and television works and publicity films, adding music and limbs, such as He Xuan^[11], Li Zhenyu^[12], Wang Xiaomei^[13], Guan Shaoyang^[14], etc. As far as multimodal metaphorical representation is concerned, Forceville summed up four types of metaphorical representation based on the study of plane image advertising metaphor, including three kinds of image metaphors: MP1 (metaphors with one pictorially present term), MP2 (metaphors with two pictorially present terms), PSs (pictorial simile) and VPMs (verbal-pictorial metaphors)^[5]. Later, Forceville revised the classification and resummarized four types of Metaphors: MP1 (contextual metaphor), MP2 (hybrid metaphor), PSs (pictorial simile) and integrated metaphor^[15]. In addition, from the perspective of systemic function, Feng Dezheng divides text image metaphor into three categories: cross modal mapping, single mode mapping and multimodal mapping^[16]. Yu Yanming thinks that Feng Dezheng's classification is too general for specific categories, so he further distinguishes six modes of modal configuration^[17]. Lan and Zuo^[18] integrate the classification of Feng and Yu, and add Yu's implicit metaphor on the basis of Feng, and think that it belongs to the category of implicit mapping. However, the above four categories only summarize the configuration of text and image modes, so they are more suitable for static genre analysis such as print advertisement or cartoon, which are difficult to be applied to dynamic genre analysis. Therefore, it is necessary for us to propose the multimodal representation types and modal configuration methods that are suitable for China's high-speed rail promotional films.

3. The Types of Metaphorical Representations in English and Chinese High-Speed Rail Promotional Films

3.1 Research Questions

This paper focuses on the representation types of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese high-speed rail promotional films. The specific research questions are as follows: (1) what are the main modes used to represent multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese high-speed rail promotional films? What are the main types of representations? (2) what are the linguistic features of these representation types in the cognitive construction of multimodal metaphor mapping and why?

3.2 Research Materials and Methods

The corpus of WeChat keyword search is used to find 11 promotional videos with multimodal metaphors, mostly from Tencent videos, and a few from WeChat official accounts. In the corpus collection, we considered the following factors: first, WeChat search is not only the same as Baidu search web search function, but also can search WeChat official accounts and articles, and collate the search contents; second, Tencent video is a resourceful online integrated video platform with popular content and professional media operation capability; finally, the identification of multimodal metaphors in corpus is mainly based on the criteria mentioned by Forceville: (1) in a given context, the source domain and the target domain belong to different categories, and they are respectively represented by different modes; (2) there is similarity between the source domain and the target domain, and one or more features and connotations of the source domain can be mapped to the target domain. After finding out the representation mode, source domain, target domain and the mapping mode between them, the main representation types of multimodal metaphor in the corpus and the number and proportion of each type are counted by chart, and one example from each type is selected for analysis.^[19]

3.3 Research Results and Analysis

3.3.1 The Main Types of Multimodal Metaphorical Representations in English and Chinese High-Speed Rail Promotional Films

Based on Feng Dezheng, Yu Yanming and Lan&Zuo's representation and modal collocation classification of text image metaphors, the author summarizes the basic representation types of multimodal metaphors in China's high-speed rail promotional films, namely, single-mode mapping, cross-modal mapping, multimodal mapping and implicit mapping, which can be further divided into nine sub categories, nine modal collocations Formula (see Table 1).

Table 1 the Main Representation Types of Multimodal Metaphors in English and Chinese High Speed Rail Promotional Films

Representation Type	Number of Metaphors	Ratio 1	Ratio 2
Single Mode Mapping	10		10%
Source domain: language--target domain: language--(other modal assistance)	7	70%	
Source domain: image--target domain: image-- (other modal assistance)	3	30%	
Cross Modal Mapping	20		20%
Source domain: image--target domain: language-- (other modal assistance)	15	75%	
Source domain: language--target domain: image--(other modal assistance)	5	25%	
Multimodal Mapping	40		40%
Source domain: graph language--target domain: language--(other modal assistance)	20	50%	
Source domain: graph language--target domain: image--(other modal assistance)	18	45%	
Source domain: image--target domain: language--(other modal assistance)	2	5%	
Implicit Mapping	30		30%
Source domain: graph language--target domain: implication--(other modal assistance)	5	16.7%	
Source domain: implication--target domain: language--(other modal assistance)	25	83.3%	
Total	100		100%

It can be seen from Table 1 that the representation types of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese high-speed rail promotional films are mainly multimodal mapping, accounting for about half of the selected corpus, which reflects the multimodality of the promotional films to a certain extent. In terms of modal configuration, the source domain is mostly represented by graphics, while the target domain is more dependent on language (commentary or subtitle) and images. Language mode, because of its powerful ideographic function, is superior to image mode in explaining abstract concepts. However, many high-speed rail promotional films do not have commentary, and only rely on subtitles to present the target domain. However, in terms of intuition, image mode is better than language mode. In addition to real dynamic images, some promotional films also add 3D animation. Besides, the author can also find that in addition to image and language, other modes, such as music and non-verbal sound, sometimes play an auxiliary role in the presentation of metaphorical dual domain. And many high-speed railway propaganda films often have the same music throughout the whole article, so music plays a little role in metaphor. The following will be combined with the specific propaganda video fragment detailed analysis.

3.3.1.1. Single Mode Mapping

Single mode mapping means that both the source domain and the target domain are presented by

one mode, and other modes are auxiliary modes, which play the role of illustration, example and contrast to the source domain or target domain^[20]. Similarly, the mode configuration of single mode mapping metaphor in *The New Era of China's High-Speed Rail* is relatively single, and there is only one mode of “source domain: language--target domain: language--other modal assistance”. The advantage of this method is that the metaphorical dual domain is presented directly through the language mode, so as to ensure that the audience can correctly identify the metaphorical expression and meaning in the propaganda film to the greatest extent, as shown in Figure 1.



Fig.1 A Row of Fuxing Vehicles Has Become a New Background of the Times, and a Number of Modern Stations Have Become New Landmarks of the Times

The language mode of “一列列复兴号成为时代新背景,一座座现代化车站成为时代新地标” directly shows a group of metaphors to the audience: “Fuxing is the background” and “modern stations are landmarks”. They have no cultural background words and are directly translated into “China standard EMU has become the new background of the times, and modern stations have become the new landmarks of the era.” The source domain and target domain of the two groups of metaphors are revealed by means of language mode, while the image modes of “high-speed railway station with Fuxing logo” and “high-speed railway stations such as Harbin West Railway Station, Guangzhou south railway station, Kunming South Railway Station and Chengdu East Railway Station” provides visual support for source domain “Fuxing” and “modern station”, which shows that high-speed rail links all parts of China and promotes the development of domestic transportation. High-speed rail is a landmark product of the new era.

3.3.1.2. Cross Modal Mapping

Cross-modal mapping refers to the fact that the source domain and the target domain belong to different modalities^[15], which belongs to Forceville’s narrow definition of multimodal metaphor. In “China High-Speed Rail in the New Era”, there are two cross-modal mappings: “source domain: language--target domain: image--other modal assistance” and “source domain: image--target domain: language--other modal assistance”, as shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

Figure 2 “车轮滚滚,展现着美丽中国的壮丽画卷” belongs to the first type of cross-modal mapping, which is translated as “The wheels are rolling, showing the magnificent picture of beautiful China.” The source domain is a “picture scroll”, which is expressed by the language mode of the commentary, and the target domain is “China’s great rivers and mountains”. It is shown by the image mode of China’s urban stations and surrounding modern infrastructure.



Fig.2 The Wheels Are Rolling, Showing the Magnificent Picture of Beautiful China

Figure 3 belongs to the second type of cross-modal mapping. The source domains “coin”, “Great Wall” and “terraces” are presented first by pure image modalities. The target domain “land of the motherland” is then pointed out by the text mode “on the vast land of the motherland”. The word “on” accurately anchors the mapping relationship between the source domain (image) and the target domain (text), and the two modalities evoke “the stability of the high-speed rail is standing by the window”. Metaphors such as “Fixed coins”, “Beijing is the Great Wall”, and “Jiangnan water villages are terraces” respectively illustrate the stability of China’s high-speed rail trains and the wide distribution of China’s high-speed rail lines.



Fig.3 “Coin”, “Great Wall”, “Terrace”

3.3.1.3. Multimodal Mapping

Feng Dezheng defines multimodal mapping in text-image metaphor as a mapping that exists in both language and image^[16]. The author defines the multimodal mapping in the English-Chinese high-speed rail films as a metaphor in which the source or target domain is presented by more than two modalities, and further divides the multimodal mapping in the Chinese high-speed rail films into three categories: source domain: graphic language--target domain: language--(other modal auxiliary), source domain: graphic language--target domain: image--(other modal auxiliary) and source domain: image--target domain: graphic language--(other modal auxiliary). But there is no last type of multimodal metaphor in “China High-Speed Rail in the New Era”.

“两万五千里钢铁大动脉正在强劲脉动” in Figure 4 is in line with the first type of multimodal mapping. It is translated as “the 25,000-kilometer steel aorta is pulsating vigorously”. The aorta is used in English as “aorta”. It is an important condition for the existence of human life. High-speed rail is the main artery of China, which reflects that high-speed rail has become an

indispensable means of transportation for the Chinese people. The strong pulsating “pulsating vigorously” has two meanings. One is that China’s high-speed rail has achieved significant results. The second is that China’s high-speed rail is still developing. Since its development, China has become the country with the most comprehensive high-speed railway system technology, the strongest integration capability, the longest operating mileage, the highest operating speed, and the largest scale of construction in the world^[21]. The first source field that appeared was the high-speed rail speeding on the bridge, vividly highlighting the “movement” of the steel arteries, and at the same time explained in the language mode of “25,000 kilometers of steel arteries are pulsating strongly”. Then, the dynamic process of “pulsation” is further explained by the glittering image mode of “eight vertical and eight horizontal” of China’s high-speed rail network, which conforms to the dynamic and vivid characteristics of multimodal metaphor, and makes the metaphor of “China’s high-speed rail network is the main artery”.



Fig.4 “25,000-Kilometer Steel Aorta is Pulsating Vigorously”

Among the multimodal metaphor types of “source domain: graphic language--target domain: image (other modal assistance)”, there is one such type in “China High Speed Rail in the New Era”. Figure5 “世界小了,梦想大了;家人近了,乡愁浓了” succinctly translated as “Small world, big dream; close distance, weak feelings”, the two sets of antonyms show that China’s high-speed rail has brought the world. The changes in the scenes of the four interpersonal relationships were edited together using montage techniques, accompanied by the commentary “The world is smaller, the dream is bigger”, which is a metaphor for “The world is a village”.



Fig.5 The World is Small, the Dream is Big; the Family is Near, the Homesickness is Thicker

3.3.1.4. Implicit Mapping

Implicit mapping means metaphors that are not directly presented in the source or target domain. The audience needs to rely on certain context and background knowledge to infer the hidden source or target domain, and then realize the identification and interpretation of the metaphor^[19]. The implicit mapping in China’s high-speed rail promotional films can be roughly divided into “source domain: graphic language--target domain: implicit--(other modal assistance)” and “source domain: implicit--target domain: language--(other modal assistance)” class. The first type of implicit mapping does not appear in this promotional film. In the second mode configuration mode, the hidden source domain is mostly specific people, objects, etc., and the corresponding source domain does not appear. However, we can determine that the source domain refers to China’s high-speed rail by judging the image and text modes. The details are as follows:

Table 2 Source Domain: Implication--Target Domain: Language--(Other Modal Assistance)

Source domain composition	Chinese captions	English translation	Metaphor
Crew images, subtitles, music	“风雨无阻,陪伴温馨旅途”	Regardless of the weather, it accompanies your journey with sweetness.	High speed rail is family and friend.
Dashboard images, subtitles, music	“你有惊艳的速度”	You have a stunning speed.	High speed rail is human
Online ticket purchase, mobile payment, intelligent navigation, face brushing and entering station, self-service ordering, Wi-Fi image of station bus, subtitle, commentary and music	“你有过人的智慧”	You have extraordinary wisdom.	High speed rail is human

4. Conclusion

Based on the multimodal metaphor representation theory and Forceville’s multimodal metaphor theory, this paper discusses the basic representation types and modal configuration of 11 English and Chinese high-speed rail promotional films. The findings of this paper are as follows: 1) multimodal mapping is a common type of metaphorical representation in English and Chinese high-speed railway promotional films, in which “source domain: diagram language--target domain: language--(other modal assistance)” is a common mode configuration mode, followed by implicit mapping, cross modal mapping, and finally single mode mapping; 2) When presenting implicit mapping, language and image are the main modes, while the combination of image and language is often used to present specific source domain, and language is mostly used to present abstract target domain; 3) auxiliary modes such as music are more used to assist in presenting source domain rather than target domain^[19], and these modes have no obvious auxiliary effect. For example, the music mode in *The New Era of China’s High-Speed Rail* is pure background music. In conclusion, the basic representation types and modal configuration methods of multimodal metaphors in China’s high-speed rail promotional films have vividly constructed the image of China’s high-speed rail with four competitive edges: advanced technology, safety and reliability, cost effectiveness, and rich operating experience, which plays a crucial role in promoting the product in international negotiation.

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