

Multi-modal Discourse Analysis of National Image Construction in the Documentary Human World

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Abstract: With the development of the times, the world pattern is constantly changing. For a country to develop well, it should not only improve its own comprehensive strength, but also build a good national image. Since the outbreak of the epidemic, some rumors and public opinion at home and abroad have seriously damaged China's national image. As a result, Chinese state media have launched a series of documentaries on the fight against the epidemic, which truly record the correct attitude of Chinese leaders towards the epidemic and the determination of frontline medical workers to fight the epidemic. This has not only provided a satisfactory answer to domestic diplomacy, but also demonstrated to the world a responsible and capable image of China. This paper selects the "human world" documentary as the research object, using quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how Chinese state media can build and maintain China's national image through documentaries. Based on the theory of system functional language and the framework of multi-modal discourse analysis, this paper found that the documentary presents the facts in the fight against COVID-19 and shapes the characters in the anti-epidemic through images. And through the relationship between text and text, with vivid narrative language and pictures to build a united, responsible, people supreme Chinese image.

Keywords: Multi-Modal Discourse Analysis; National Image; Anti-Epidemic Documentary.

1. Introduction

This chapter is the introduction part of the thesis, summarizing the research background, research problems, and research significance of this thesis.

1.1. Research Background

National image is an important part of national soft power. The national image is a comprehensive evaluation of a country's culture, politics and economy. A good national image can not only help to establish a good international diplomatic relation, but also improve the voice in the international arena. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in China in early 2020, countries around the world have been infected to varying degrees. China leads by example, and the people of the whole country united together to protest and achieved certain results. At the same time, when the epidemic ravaged China, China still helps neighboring countries. However, China's international image has not been positively recognized by the international community, and the Western media has wantonly denigrated China. Rumors of the "China virus", "China threat" and "China conspiracy" have intensified, causing unprecedented damage to China's national image.

Documentary is a unique form of media to describe reality, reflect nature and spread culture. It is an important channel, carrier and symbol to tell Chinese stories well, clarify the facts and shape the image of China[1]. In the face of questions and smears from the Western media, the official Chinese media presented to the world in a multi-modal documentary the attitude and determination of China in fighting the epidemic, and the greatness of the country in assisting the suffering countries in times of crisis. Based on the theory of system functional language and the functional theory of visual grammar, the documentary "The Human World" is selected as

the object of study, and quantitative and qualitative methods are used to analyze the text and explore how Chinese official media construct and maintain China's national image through documentaries? and what kind of Chinese national image has been constructed.

1.2. Research Significance

Since the reform and opening up, China's comprehensive strength has been improving, and China's economic level has steadily ranked second in the world, but at the same time, Western countries have been suppressing China's development and implementing hostile acts against China. In 2020, COVID-19 occurred in China and spread around the world, some Western media used this as an excuse to fabricate false words and deliberately tarnish China's national image. As China has entered a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, it is particularly important to build a discourse system with Chinese characteristics, to tell the Chinese story well to the outside world, to present a real, three-dimensional and comprehensive China, and to build a good national image [2]. In this era of challenges and opportunities, China's official media can build a positive image of the Chinese state to the world through multi-modal discourse texts. Documentaries are one of the multi-modal discursive texts that have both political and social purposes, and can convey messages to generate emotional responses and social effectiveness [3]. Moreover, based on real events, the documentary can truly, intuitively and comprehensively present the process of China's fight against the epidemic. Therefore, the Chinese media launched the documentary "The human world", which recorded the process of the Chinese people fighting against the epidemic with real narrative language and pictures, and created a united, responsible and people-first national image. According to the statistics, there are few studies on the combination of anti-epidemic

documentary and national image in China, This paper takes the documentary "The Human World" as the research object and discusses how the documentary constructs China's national image based on systemic functional language theory and visual grammar function theory. This has enriched, to some extent, the research based on the combination of the documentary on the fight against the epidemic and the image of the country.

2. Literature Review

This chapter mainly reviews the literature on the related studies of national image and a multi-modal discourse. This article first introduces the definition of national image and multi-modal discourse, and then reviews the relevant literature at home and abroad, to gain a systematic and comprehensive understanding of national image and the multi-modal discourse analysis theory.

2.1. The Research Status of the National Image

Scholars have different opinions on the definition of the national image, and there is no unified conclusion at present. Western scholars have studied the image of the state earlier. Harold Lasswell 's research mentioned that "in order to influence the course of the war, the warring countries in the First World War chose to spread and construct the relevant corpus of their own national image". With the development of The Times, people have a clearer definition of the national image. The American scholar Martin [4] believes that the national image is a "multi-dimensional" construction, which is "the sum of descriptive, inferential and informative beliefs about a specific country." [5] is more subjective. He believes that "the national image is the sum of an individual's personal experiences, opinions, memories and impressions of a country, which includes the individual's feelings and aesthetics towards the country." This shows that the image of the country is both subjective and objective. The author believes that the subjective nature of the country's image lies in the extent to which the public perceives a country and how they evaluate and judge the country's behavior. The objectivity of the national image lies in the fact that the country is a collection of all material bases, which has materiality.

The study of the national image in China started relatively late, With the improvement of China's comprehensive strength, the international influence of China's discourse has gradually expanded, and domestic scholars pay more and more attention to the national image. Youzhong Sun [6] put forward in his research that the national image is the public's understanding and evaluation of the country's politics, economy, culture and society. Thus it can be seen that the national image is a concrete performance of a country's comprehensive strength. Some scholars divide the national image into domestic image and foreign image. Manli Cheng [7] believes that the domestic image of the national image is the precipitation of history, and it is the spiritual crystallization of the country and the nation. Xiaoyan Liu believes that the national image is "the comprehensive evaluation of the international public on a country's relatively stability, and is the sum total of the views and judgments of a country". Generally speaking, the national image is abstract, subjective, and susceptible to the influence of mass media remarks.

In terms of the current situation of China's national image, China's domestic image and international image have obvious differences. According to reports made by the official Chinese

media, China's position is against hegemony, maintains peace and supports the international just cause, which fully demonstrates the peace-loving image of the Chinese people. The situation of political stability, economic development, social progress and national unity in China, which fully demonstrates the image of the Chinese people's unremitting struggle to maintain stability and unity and achieve prosperity and strength. However, in the research of Xiguang Li [8] it was found that the foreign media "demonized" China and guided the foreign public to distort China's national image through media speech. They portrayed China as "a pirate of intellectual and property rights" and "a madman of future war". After the outbreak of the new epidemic in China, the foreign media became even more frantic to discredit China, describing it as a "Chinese virus", a "Chinese conspiracy" and a "Chinese threat". Comprehensive research has found that there is a big gap between a country's international image and its domestic image. In this context, China needs to speak up for itself and correct the international community's perception of China.

2.2. Multi-modal Discourse Analysis

In recent years, multi-modal discourse research has received much attention from scholars. multi-modal discourse research was first introduced by Kreis and Van Lo Wen on the basis of Hanley's systemic functional linguistics. They believe that multi-modal discourse refers to the use of language, image, sound, color and music for multiple modal communication, in which language and non-language resources jointly construct the meaning of discourse. Domestic scholars are relatively late in their research on multi-modal discourse. Zhanzi Li first introduced multi-modal sign theory to domestic papers, and in his article "Social semiotic analysis of multi-modal discourse", he introduced in detail the visual grammar and image analysis method of Kreis and Van Loven. This paper raises the research of multi-modal discourse by domestic scholars. Delu Zhang [9] established a multi-modal discourse analysis framework based on system functional linguistics. This framework consists of five levels: cultural, contextual, meaningful, formal and media. (1) The cultural level, including ideology as the main form of culture and genre as the potential of discourse mode. (2) Contextual level, including the context configuration composed of discourse scope, discourse tone and discourse mode. (3) Meaning level, including discourse meaning and conceptual meaning, interpersonal meaning and schematic meaning composed of several parts. (4) The formal level includes the lexical grammatical system, the auditory grammatical system, the tactile grammatical system, etc. and the relationship between the modalities.

Multi-modal discourse analysis is widely used. Domestic scholars apply multi-modal discourse analysis not only to foreign language teaching, but also to documentaries, films, advertisements and cartoons. In recent years, with the improvement of China's comprehensive strength, the relevant research of national image has received attention. Many scholars have combined "multi-modal discourse" with "national image". Scholars in this field mostly focus on political documentaries and state propaganda films in multi-modal discourse texts, while fewer studies have combined multi-modal discourse texts and national image construction with anti-epidemic documentaries. Therefore, this paper selects the documentary "The Human World" as the object of

study, and explores how the documentary constructs China's national image based on systemic functional language theory and multi-modal discourse analysis framework theory. To some extent, it enriches the research of documentary on fighting the epidemic as a multi-modal discourse text and national image.

3. Multi-modal Presentation of Anti-epidemic Documentaries

Based on visual grammar theory, and systemic functional grammar theory, this chapter explores how "The Human World" uses image modality and graphic relationships to construct the national image of China.

3.1. Image Modality

Visual grammar theory plays an important role in the interpretation of the meaning of image modalities at the formal level of multi-modal discourse. The theoretical framework of visual grammar is divided into the reproduction level, the interaction level and the composition level. These three dimensions correspond to the conceptual, interpersonal, and discourse functions of Hanley's language, respectively. In this paper, we will use the functional theory of visual grammar to analyze "The Human World" and explore how "The Human World" uses three levels of reproduction, interaction and composition to construct the image of China as a nation.

3.1.1. Significance of Image Reproduction

According to the theory of visual grammar, the reproduction meaning of images is divided into two categories: narrative and concept. The narrative mode mainly includes action participants, movements and environment. Elements of images such as people, things, and objects can generate meaning through structure [10]. The sign of the meaning of narrative reproduction is vector. In images, vectors typically associate action emitting participants in the image with action target participants in a strongly diagonal line. The participants of the action themselves constitute the vector and occupy the most dominant position in the image. The two interact in a vector, and the completion of this interaction consists of two parts, the action process and the reaction process.

There is a lot of narrative re-enactment footage in the documentary "The Human World". For example, in Figure 1, the doctor's gaze and body are directed towards the patient, checking the patient's vital signs, and this action constitutes a vector between them both. This reflects the doctor's unfailing concern for the patient and the doctor's spirit of not being afraid to sacrifice before an infectious disease. As well as the patient's trust in the doctor. Figure 2 shows the first meeting of a couple after 40 days of working at two hospitals. The two looked at each other and asked each other if they were fit to work in the hospital. This reflects the spirit of Chinese doctors being able to leave their warm home and make selfless dedication to the society in the face of the epidemic. The narrative re-enactment footage in the documentary reflects the calm and unafraid spirit of Chinese doctors in the face of the epidemic. There is no vector in the image of the concept, which means that something is present, or that some events occur. It also shows a more persistent state or a more generalized function of these two processes. There are very few images of the concept reproduced in the documentary "The Human World". In Figure 3, the medical workers

mourned the lives lost in the epidemic. They kept their heads down and did not communicate and interact. This reflects the regret and sadness of health care professionals for the patients who have passed away, as well as the respect for life.



Figure 1. The doctor checks the patient's signs



Figure 2. A doctor couple greets each other



Figure 3. Healthcare workers observe a moment of silence for the dead patients

3.1.2. Interactive Meaning of Images

Images present a picture that creates an interactive relationship with the viewer, and these images can be classified as solicited images and provided images. The request-like image means when the participant in the image interacts with the viewer through the eyes, and this image will produce a request intention for the viewer. As in Figure 4, a patient about to be discharged from the hospital, holding a balloon, faces the camera and smiles at everyone. He said that in addition to thanking the medical staff for their careful care, he also wanted to thank the party and the state for helping him cover his medical expenses. He not only gave the patients in front of the camera the courage to overcome the epidemic, but also expressed his gratitude to the Party and the country. As in Figure 5, after the patients in the hospital have recovered, all the medical staff, as well as the rescuers, smile and cheer to the camera and say goodbye to the city of Wuhan. This reflects the hard work of the medical rescue team, but also expresses the unity of the Chinese people. The participants in the provided class image do not direct their gaze at the viewer, but simply provide some information. As in Figure 6, the tired doctor falls asleep on the bus after work in his scrubs. The quiet bus is only the doctor, if there is no epidemic, the bus should have a lot of people. This demonstrates the dedication of the doctors and the cooperation of the general public with

the epidemic prevention policy.



Figure 4. The patient thanks the party and the state



Figure 5. Healthcare workers greet the camera



Figure 6. A doctor falls asleep on the bus

3.1.3. Compositional Meaning of the Image

The compositional meaning of the image is the basis for reproducing meaning and interactive meaning, and the meaning composition function of the image is mainly realized by information value and saliency. The value of information is mainly reflected in the placement of composition elements. Different placement of composition elements conveys different meanings. And there are two main types of placements, one is the left or right side, the other is above or below. As in Figure 7, on the left side of the image, the doctor touches the patient with his hand, hoping to bring comfort to the patient. On the right is a whiteboard with words of encouragement and comfort. The image contains three information: characters, actions, and medical tools. In Figure 8, on the left of the image is a doctor rescued from Shanghai to Wuhan, and on the right is a resident who volunteered to transport the doctor to and from work. Here contains two information: people and transport vehicles saliency refer to the image attracting the audience through the difference of front and rear scenes and tone. In Figure 9, the ambulance's warning lights contrast with the dark road. This shows that during the epidemic, the medical staff worked day and night to save the patients, they are a beam of light in the night, but also the hope of victory.



Figure 7. A doctor encourages a patient



Figure 8. A volunteer picks up doctors to and from work

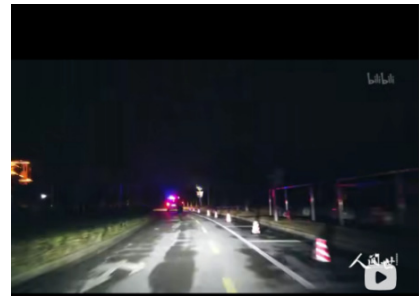


Figure 9. Ambulances in the dark

3.2. Graphic Relationship

Language can express a clear meaning. In documentaries, text can explain information that cannot be expressed in the picture, allowing the viewer to understand the meaning of the image more directly. In Barthes research, he suggests that "images have many meanings and may be interpreted differently by the viewer, so words are needed to control the viewer's consciousness and thus limit the meaning of the image. Kress and van Leeuwen do not agree with this statement. He believes that although images and words are related. Images do not depend on words. Images and words can be independent, and images themselves have structure. On this basis, Martinec & Salway summarizes four graphic relationships. One is that images and words are not related to each other, and they are both separate entities of meaning. Second, the image and the text complement each other and explain each other's meaning. Third, the text is subordinate to the image and the text plays a supporting role to the image. Fourth, the image is subordinate to the text, and the image has a supporting role for the text.

3.2.1. Complementary Graphic Relationships

Through statistics, the author shows that in the documentary film "Human World", there are more presentations of graphic relationships in which images and texts are complementary, independent of each other and subordinate to the text. But there is little graphic relationship of text subordinate to images. For example, in Figures 10 and 11, a health care worker is wearing a heavy protective suit, mask, and goggles. The text is "every medical staff working

in the red zone, in addition to the psychological pressure, the most direct impact is sultry, lack of oxygen, because the whole protective clothing is sealed". The images do not show the drawbacks of the suits and the suffering of the health care workers, while the text adds to the explanation of the psychological and physical stresses that the health care workers endure while working. In Figure 12 and Figure 13, the text is described as "Huashan medical team, perfect ending" The two images show health care workers gathered together, waving flags, and holding signs that say "Celebrate Patient Healing". The image adds that all the patients in the hospital have recovered and been discharged from the hospital, and it also reflects the unity and friendship of the medical staff. In Figure 14, 15 and 16, the image presents a drawing made by a child to support his father in Wuhan. In the painting, Dad and his colleague's are wearing protective suits, giving injections and medication to patients, and finally defeating the virus. The text narrative reads, "I miss you, dear Dad, and I know that as long as Dad goes to Wuhan to save the patients, we can win the battle." The words and images express the child's missing of his father. The child believed that his father could defeat the virus and brought great encouragement to his father. Thus, the complementary relationship between graphics and text is also reflected here.



Figure 10. Medical workers in heavy protective suits (1)

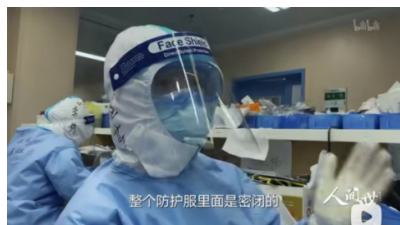


Figure 11. Medical workers in heavy protective suits (2)



Figure 12. Health care workers overcame the epidemic (1)



Figure 13. Health care workers overcame the epidemic (2)



Figure 14. A picture drawn by a child to encourage his father (1)



Figure 15. A picture drawn by a child to encourage his father (2)



Figure 16. A picture drawn by a child to encourage his father (3)

3.2.2. Image and Text Independent of Each Other

Regarding the independent relationship between images and words, Kress and van Leeuwen believe that both language and images can be used to realize the basic meaning of cultural elements, and they have their own unique ways of expression. The independent relationship between images and text is also presented in the documentary. In Figure 17, Figure 18 and Figure 19, "Hubei province has 840 new coronavirus pneumonia cases and 25 new deaths in the province." The text illustrates the severity of the epidemic, but the images present the bus station, the high-speed train station. Image and text are not directly related, so they are independent of each other.

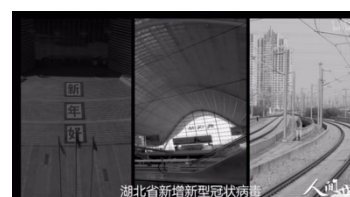


Figure 17. Bus station, high-speed railway station (1)



Figure 18. Bus station, high-speed railway station (2)



Figure 19. Bus station, high-speed railway station (3)

3.2.3. Image Subordinate Text

The relationship of image subordination to text is more common in this documentary. In the juxtaposition of graphic images, the meaning of language expression is more certain, it can more directly summarize the content and process of events. The images only assist in presenting the time and space of events and people. In Figure 20, the text is, " On February 16,2020, China's first autopsy of COVID-19 was completed at Wuhan Jinyintan Hospital. The images simply show the location of the event at Jinyintan Hospital, while the text summarizes the event in its entirety. In Figure 21 and Figure 22, the contents of the images are three doctors and nurses cutting their hair. And the text narrative is "in the face of the epidemic, medical staff are not afraid of hardship, heal the wounded and rescue the dying, protect life, love without boundaries "The image only shows that the medical staff gave up their hair in order not to delay their work, but does not show the process of the medical staff saving the dying.



Figure 20. Wuhan Jinyintan Hospital



Figure 21. Doctors and nurses cut their hair (1)



Figure 22. Doctors and nurses cut their hair (2)

4. China's National Image Construction

As an important part of a country's "soft power", the national image is a comprehensive display of a country's history and reality, politics and economy, culture and value. The documentary takes the real events as the theme, and uses the diversified artistic means to create the beauty of simplicity, true love and power. The slightly rough, shaky images and noisy, fuzzy sounds truly restore the front line of the epidemic. The "Human World" uses vivid narrative language and images

to show the responsible, people-oriented and united national spirit of China in the face of public health emergencies.

4.1. People First, Life First National Image

After the outbreak, General Secretary Jinping Xi made important instructions: "Party committees and governments at all levels and relevant departments are required to put people's lives and health first and take practical and effective measures to resolutely curb the spread of the epidemic." Documentary "The Human World" records the reality of the fight against the epidemic. To contain the spread of the epidemic and restrict the movement of people, all airports, trains, and high-speed trains have been shut down. Only medical team vehicles were allowed to pass, and the Chinese cities were quiet. According to the national policy, all medical expenses of the new crown patients are covered by the state, and doctors can treat patients regardless of cost. In the documentary, an 80-year-old patient with a new crown suffers rapid necrosis of his entire right leg due to diabetic toxicity. Doctors contacted multiple hospitals, transferred the old man to a hospital for treatment, and called in a number of renowned doctors to amputate his leg and save his life. In the eyes of the doctor, every life, as long as there is hope, the doctor will strive for it. The treatment plan for each COVID-19 patient is different, which requires the best doctors and top-of-the-line equipment. In the midst of an epidemic, people praise medical personnel as heroes, but for doctors, it is nothing more than a simple professionalism. It is their duty to stay at their posts and save people's lives. There is a lot of footage in the documentary showing the doctor's original intention to save lives. A nurse on the front line of the fight against the epidemic in Shanghai, named Xiaoli Yang, is holding her post and guarding the lives of patients while her mother is being treated for a new coronavirus infection. Psychiatrist Dr. Peng Daihui, a doctor on the Shanghai medical team, passed by home several times, but was unable to stop and meet his family because of the severity of the epidemic. This is the most vivid interpretation of the national image of putting the people first and putting the life first.

4.2. The Image of United China

Unity and friendship are not only China's core socialist values, but also China's national spirit. In the face of the sudden epidemic, during the Chinese New Year, the Chinese government "closed" cities across the country to curb the spread of the virus. people have stepped forward in the face of danger, showing the image of a united China. The whole country is united to respond to the call of the state, everyone voluntarily stays at home in order not to add trouble to the country. In the documentary, the outbreak occurred in Wuhan, where most COVID-19 patients gathered, and there was not enough medical staff in local hospitals. On the night of New Year's Eve, three medical teams from Shanghai, Guangdong and the army arrived in Wuhan overnight and put into work. This reflects not only the speed of China, but also the power of Chinese unity. In the documentary, there are also many spontaneous volunteer teams. Some volunteers drive their private cars to transport medical workers to and from work. Some volunteers get up at 4:30 am to prepare breakfast for the medical staff. Some cleaners who are over 50 years volunteer to clean the hospital. Some delivery men run around hospitals to deliver food to medical staff. In the face of disasters that threaten all people, everyone can be a beam of light that illuminates others and warms themselves. This documentary

is a testament to the unity of China.

5. Conclusion

Combined with the above, this paper takes the documentary "The Human World" as the research object, Exploring the presentation meaning of multi-modal discourse in documentary based on system functional language theory and visual grammar function theory. Analyzing the documentary in terms of image modality and graphic relationship, the study found that China is a responsible, people-oriented and united power in the face of major public health emergencies.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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