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A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Geographical Indication trademark of China Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

Guided by the theories of systemic functional linguistics and social semiotics, this paper analyzes the specific embodiment of representational, interactive and compositional meanings of the geographical indication trademark of China intangible cultural heritage within the theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis. Based on the analysis results, this paper aims to reveal the effective linkage and meaning construction of language and images while expressing the deep value meaning of intangible cultural heritage geographical trademark and provide ideas to raise people's concern over and multimodal literacy of China intangible cultural heritage, thus better protect and promote it.

Keywords: Multimodal discourse; Intangible cultural heritage; Geographical indication trademark.

1. Introduction

Geographical indication (GI) of intangible cultural heritage is a new thing that highlights in the practice of geographical indication in China. In terms of trademark attribute, it contains the attributes of both intangible cultural heritage and geographical indication trademark. In terms of cultural attribute, both "geographical indication" and "intangible cultural heritage", the representatives of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, share a long history and cultural origin. In China, "geographical indication" has become a kind of "public brand", serving as a public resource for local governments to build regional characteristics brand. Therefore, many studies focus on the protection of intangible cultural heritage with geographical indications as the intellectual property rights. Li (2020), argued that there is consistency in geographical origin, commonality and preservation in cultural value between geographical indication and tea-making intangible cultural heritage. It is feasible to use geographical indications to protect the tea-making intangible cultural heritage. Yang (2020), found that as an effective way to protect intangible cultural heritage, geographical indications should be scientifically legislated to realize the harmonious development and achieve unified standards in the judicial process. However, there are few studies on the geographical indication trademark of China intangible cultural heritage itself from the perspective of linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis.

Under the influence of the rapid development of multimedia and computer technology, multimodal communication means, including language, audiovisual symbols, body language, are booming and impacting people's traditional way of thinking and appreciation habits. With the advent of new media era, discourse is not only embodied by text modality, but also by pictures, animation, sound, chart, color, action and other modalities appearing simultaneously. This paper attempts to use Kress & van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis method to analyze the geographical indication trademark of China intangible cultural heritage and discusses how images and text as social symbols synergize to construct meanings and cultural values.

2. Theoretical Basis of Multimodal Discourse Analysis
2.1. The Origin of Multimodal Discourse

Kress and van (1996), First proposed the concept of "multimodal discourse. However, the multimodality of discourse is not a new phenomenon. For a long time, in theoretical and practical research, people tend to focus on one mode while ignoring other modes and artificially distinguishing and demarcating various communication modes, thus leading to the mainstream of single-modal research. For example, linguists focus only on language expressions, leaving images in texts for artists to analyze. The meaning of image construction, or the meaning expressed through the interaction of the two modes, is marginalized or completely ignored. People tend to focus on lingual meaning alone, and classify other meanings (such as phonetics, intonation, environment, and so on.) as paralinguistic features or contextual factors, which have nothing to do with language study. However, these symbolic patterns are also

involved in meaning expression, but belong to different levels of meaning construction. "Language use, whether spoken or written, is invariably constructed by multiple modalities of communication" (Levine and Ron, 2004), so "all texts are multimodal" (Kress and van, 1996).

In the rapid development of discourse analysis theory, it was found that discourse could no longer be analyzed and studied in depth and comprehensively from the perspective of language alone, thus multimodal discourse came into view. Bernstein (1990), argued that meaningful expressions with two or more unimodal components constitute multimodal expressions. According to Machin (2007), multimodality is essential in our daily life when we obtain information or communicate with others. When communicating with others, apart from verbal language, gestures, eye contacts and body movements are also involved in expressing the meaning of words, which is a multimodal process of communication activity. According to Zhang (2009), multimodal discourse analysis refers to the phenomenon of communicating through multiple means and symbolic resources such as language, images, sounds, gestures and multiple senses like hearing, vision, and touch.

2.2. Four Levels of the Multimodal Discourse Analysis Framework

Systemic functional linguistics provides a relatively ready-made theoretical framework for multimodal discourse analysis. That is to say, there is no difference between unimodal verbal communication and multimodal discourse communication at the level of context and discourse meaning. Zhang (2009), provided a framework for studying multimodal discourse formed by images and language. Under this framework, language and images share four levels of ideology, genre, register, and discourse meaning as a means of communication. At the content level, pictures have visual grammar, and language has linguistic grammar; at the expression level, language is embodied in printed symbols, and graphics are embodied in graphic symbols. The main research area here is to integrate the two at the content and expression level, especially the former. Based on Halliday's theory of systemic functional linguistics and Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar, Zhang (2009) proposed an integrated framework for multimodal discourse analysis, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table-1. An integrated framework for multimodal discourse analysis

Level	Content
Culture Context Content (Meaning and Form) Expression	Cultural Context：ideology and genre. Situational Context：field, tenor and mode of discourse. Meaning: conceptual meaning, interpersonal meaning and compositional meaning. Forms and Relationships: form (verbal, graphic, acoustic, sensory)；relationships (complementary and non-complementary). Media: verbal (paralanguage and pure language) and non-verbal (physical and non-physical).

Zhang (2009), found that the most suitable theoretical model for multimodal discourse is the theory of systemic functional linguistics since it does not require the adaptation of the theoretical framework itself to suit new purposes. This framework is mainly composed of four levels, which are: (1) culture level, with ideology as the main form of existence of culture and genre as the potential choice of discourse mode. (2) context level, that is situational context consisting of discourse field, discourse tenor, and discourse mode. (3) content level, including two sub-levels of discourse meaning and form. (4) expression level, consisting of verbal and non-verbal means via media.

2.3. Forms and Relationships of Multimodalities

Zhang (2009), mentioned that in lexical grammar systems, we still distinguish between items that have an assigned meaning and rule systems that combine these items into more complex structures. In language, the former is called vocabulary and the latter is called grammar. Therefore, in other media, we can distinguish: (1) image form and image grammar, the former is an image item that can realize a certain meaning by itself, and the latter is an image structure formed by the combination of different items, which can reflect a certain (more complex) meaning. (2) sound form and sound grammar, the former is a sound item that can realize a certain meaning by itself, and the latter is a sound structure formed by the combination of different items, which can reflect a certain (more complex) meaning. (3) touch form and touch grammar, the former is a tangible body item that can realize a certain meaning by itself, and the latter is a feeling structure formed by the combination of different items, which can reflect a certain (more complex) meaning.

A typical multimodal discourse pattern is that one modal discourse cannot fully express its meaning, or cannot express all meanings, and needs to be supplemented by another, while the others are called non-complementary relations. In complementary relationships, we also need to distinguish between reinforcing and non-reinforcing relationships. The reinforcing relationship means that one modality is the main form of communication, and another or more forms reinforce it. A non-reinforcing relationship means that two communication modalities are indispensable and complementary to each other, especially the combination of auditory and visual ones. In non-reinforcing relationships, we can distinguish several forms of coordination, union, and intersection. In the coordination relationship, different modalities jointly express the overall meaning of the communicator, and the lack of anyone will be incomplete.

The relationship between modality and context can be seen as a relationship between positive and negative modalities. The context can be directly involved in the communication process, but it cannot be actively involved and can only be "pulled" into the communication process according to the communicator's purpose and the communicative method.

3. An Overview of China Intangible Cultural Heritage and its Logo

Intangible cultural heritage refers to various traditional cultural expressions that have been handed down from generation to generation by people of all ethnic groups and are regarded as an integral part of their cultural heritage, as well as the physical objects and places related to traditional cultural expressions. Intangible cultural heritage is an important symbol of the historical and cultural achievements of a nation, as well as an essential part of excellent traditional culture.

As one of the world oldest ancient civilizations, China boasts a very rich cultural heritage. By December 2020, China has possessed 42 items on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, ranking first in the world in terms of the total number of items. Among them, there are 34 masterpieces of intangible cultural heritage of humanity (including Kunqu, Guqin art, Mongolian long folk songs, etc.); 7 items on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding; and 1 item on the Register of Excellent Practices, reflecting China's increasing ability to perform and protect intangible cultural heritage, and the enhancing sense of identity and pride of heritage communities, groups, and individuals and stimulating the consciousness and enthusiasm of heritage preservation. It is of great significance to promote and carry forward the profound Chinese culture, Chinese spirit, and Chinese wisdom at the international level.

Figure-1.

The China Intangible Cultural Heritage logo (see figure 1) was selected through an online call for collection, public voting, and several rounds of expert evaluation and finally unveiled in 2006. The external graphic of the logo is a circle, symbolizing "to cycle and never disappear"; the internal graphic is a square, which corresponds to the external circle, expressing that "intangible cultural heritage exists in a vast space"; the center of the graphic is a fish pattern, one of the earliest patterns of ancient pottery, implying the homophonic pun of Chinese character "wen", which refers to intangible cultural heritage. The fish is born in water, which means "China's intangible cultural heritage has a long history and has been passed down from generation to generation"; in the center are the abstract hands protecting the word "wen", which symbolizes "unity, harmony, careful care and protection of intangible cultural heritage, guarding the spiritual home".

4. Multimodal Analysis of China Intangible Cultural Heritage Geographical Indication trademark

A geographical indication (GI) is a mark used for products with a specific geographical origin of a corresponding quality or reputation. For a mark to function as a geographical indication, it must be able to identify the product as originating from a specific source. In addition, the quality, characteristics, and reputation of the product are inherently attributable to its origin. Since quality depends on geographical origin, there is a clear link between the product and its place of origin. As mentioned before, It's necessary and feasible to protect intangible cultural heritage by using geographical indication as intellectual property mode; therefore, in order to raise people's concern over and multimodal literacy of GI to better protect and promote intangible cultural heritage, it's equally necessary and viable to analyze the GI trademark based on multimodal discourse analysis.

Figure-2.

A very important theory in systemic functional grammar is Halliday's three metafunctions, that is, the conceptual function, the interpersonal function, and the discourse function. These three metafunctions, further developed by Kress and van (1996), correspond to representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning respectively, as shown in Table 2 below, complement each other and organically constitute the overall meaning of discourse. Then this part mainly analyzes the new version of GI of P.R.China (see figure 2) in terms of three meanings.

Table-2. A social semiotical framework for multimodal discourse analysis

Aspect	Content	Function
Representational meaning	Narrative Reproduction Concept Reproduction	Actional and reactive, verbal and psychological.
	Distance	Distance determines social proximity.
Interactive meaning	Contact	The person in the image asks for or provides information to the viewer.
	Viewpoint	Different viewpoints, different symbols.
	Mood	High, medium and low moods reflect different perceptions.
	Information Value	Element position determines the importance of the element.
Compositional meaning	Framing	Splitting and connecting image elements.
	Salience	Attract the attention of the viewer.

4.1. Representational Meaning

Zhu (2007), indicated that the representational meaning of multimodal discourse analysis corresponds to the conceptual function of systemic functional grammar. In terms of representation, Kress & van Leeuwen divided it into two categories: narrative and conceptual. The narrative representation includes behavioral process, speech process, and psychological process while the conceptual one comprises relational process and existential process. And Li (2003) emphasized that the elements in the picture forming strong diagonal lines form a vector, which is the sign of narrative representation.

The image of China GI trademark is a circle with the earth in the background and the Great Wall, the silhouette of the mountains and the rice ears in the foreground. Below the hollow design of the Great Wall against the earth image with latitude and longitude lines read "GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION OF P.R.CHINA". In the imagery of this trademark logo, the Great Wall, the silhouette of mountains and the latitude and longitude lines are the participants of the sending vector and the senders of the action forming vectors to signal narrative representation, which shows the good vision of GI as a global intellectual property category to help Chinese products "go out". With the Great Wall and the silhouettes of mountains as the foreground, the dual intention of both geography and humanity represents the excellent quality and reliability of Chinese geographical indications. Rice ears, one of the most representative agricultural products in China, symbolize good harvests and life. The trademark, as a whole, reflects the authority of the official logo as well as the profound heritage of Chinese tradition.

4.2. Interactive Meaning

Corresponding to the interpersonal meaning of functional grammar, images appear as interactive meaning in multimodal discourse. "Specifically, the interactive meaning is about the relationship between the producer of the image, the object represented by the image and the viewer of the image, and also suggests the viewer's attitude towards the representation of the object." (Halliday, 1994). The realization of interactive meaning generally requires four elements, namely contact, social distance, viewpoint and mood.

In term of contact, Li (2003) suggests that the person or object in an image tends to show information to the outside viewer so that the viewer establishes a connection with the image, and thus makes an association. Kress and van (1996), called such images "providing" images. In figure 2, the trademark provides images of the earth with the latitude and longitude lines, the Great Wall, the silhouette of mountains and the rice ears, which incorporate global and Chinese characteristics as well as texts in both Chinese and English, indicating the official authority of China GI and the transmission of Chinese products across the world. Above the Great Wall and in the center of the earth, capital abbreviation "GI" is very noticeable for worldwide viewers to sense the solemnity of intellectual property right and the rich geographical and cultural resources in China.

Social distance is the degree of proximity between the participant and the viewer in the image, which can be realized by the framing of distant, middle and close range. The image of the GI trademark does not convey the indifferent social relationship, nor does it reveal the intimate relationship between the participant and the viewer. The overall horizontal viewpoint of the image shows that the GI trademark applies justice and equality to everyone, and the slight looking-up viewpoint offers the viewer the grandeur of the Great Wall and the majesty of the mountains.

4.3. Compositional Meaning

The compositional meaning of multimodal discourse corresponds to the textual function of functional grammar. The composition has three resources: information value, framing, and salience.

Information value is achieved by reproducing where elements are placed in the composition. The information placed on the top is ideal information, which is important information people want to highlight and emphasize while the information placed at the bottom is the real information, which is well-known, specific, and detailed. The trademark logo of China GI can be cut into two semicircles by the latitude line: the upper one and lower one. The earth image with striking "GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION OF P.R.CHINA" in Chinese encircling above and the capital abbreviation "GI" in the center are placed in the upper half, indicating the ideal messages and highlighting the superior geographical location of China and the profound meaning of China's greatness. The Great Wall, the silhouette of the mountains, the rice ears and "GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION OF P.R.CHINA" in English are placed below, indicating China's well-known long history and rich products and reflecting the confidence of the Chinese people in their own national products and intangible cultural heritage.

Framing is the cutting of lines by creating a dividing line or actually dividing the frame or connecting elements in the image. This allows the elements to present different views. In the trademark logo of China GI, the outline of the Great Wall serves as an irregular dividing line that splits the entire frame while connecting the lines of latitude and longitude above the image. It seems that the Great Wall and the rice ears below are the typical Chinese cultural icons, but in reality, they are integrated with the longitude and latitude lines of the earth (the world). This shows that Chinese products and culture are also an important part of human civilization.

Salience refers to the different degrees to which an element attracts the viewer's attention, achieved by being placed in the foreground or background, relative size, contrast (or color) in tonal values, differences in sharpness, and so on. In the trademark logo of China GI, red is the dominant background color contrasting with the secondary colors white and light yellow. Also, the highly saturated red, typically Chinese, can better attract the attention of the viewer. In addition, the capital "GI" and the words "GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION OF P.R.CHINA" in Chinese and English are all printed in very standardized font form, reflecting the formality and authority of the trademark. More importantly, the rice ears in light yellow encircling the earth below echo the Chinese characters in red encircling above, which depicts the compatibility and inclusiveness of Chinese culture, as well as the open connection and communication of world products and cultures.

5. Conclusion

Based on the theories of systemic functional linguistics and social semiotics, this paper applies multimodal discourse analysis to the case of the geographical indication trademark of China intangible cultural heritage, analyzing the representational, interactive and compositional meanings of images in hope of revealing the effective synergy and meaning construction of language and images and providing ideas to raise people's concern over and multimodal literacy of China intangible cultural heritage for its better protection and promotion.

In terms of limitation, this paper does not make in-depth research and innovation on the GI of intangible cultural heritage and mutlimodal discourse analysis at the theoretical level but conducts a case study of the GI trademark of China intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of mutlimodal discourse analysis. Although there are many limitations in this paper, it is still hoped that the current research can provide some constructive suggestions for researchers in related areas.

Acknowledgments

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