National Image Construction from the Perspective of Multimodal Metaphor—A Case Study of the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics

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The national image is a comprehensive concept with a distinct political feature, including the international image presented to the outside world, and also encompassing the national identity of the people. With the development of globalization, international cultural communication has become a crucial part of shaping the national image, and the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics has become an important opportunity for China to showcase its national image to the world in the post-pandemic era. Based on Forceville's multimodal metaphor theory, this paper examines the metaphorical phenomena contained in the performance and their functions, effects, and purposes in the construction of the national image. It is found that there are many scenes, images, and narratives in the opening ceremony, including war metaphor, competition metaphor, personification metaphor, and other conceptual metaphors. The focus of this paper is on multimodal metaphor in a broad sense, mainly encompassing auditory and visual modes. Through the use of these multimodal metaphors, the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics builds an image of a vibrant, peace-loving, and responsible country, which not only demonstrates China's cultural self-confidence, but also expresses the Chinese people's beautiful vision for the early reunification of the motherland.

Keywords: multimodal metaphor, national image, Olympic Winter Games Opening Ceremony

Literature Review

Multimodal metaphor is the research object of this paper. Due to the needs of the times, the original single mode is based on the language mode. However, with the development of digitalization and technological means, the single mode has become inadequate to meet contemporary needs, so the multimodal metaphor such as music and video is chosen. Furthermore, as the evolution of language itself trends towards multimodal representation, a newer research direction is necessitated—namely, multimodal metaphor.

National image is a research paradigm, which refers to the comprehensive image of a country, including not only its own people's perception of the country, but also the impression of other countries in the world. Some Chinese researchers believe that "national image is complex, and it is the overall evaluation and

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recognition given by the external and internal public to the country itself". Under the influence of politics, economy, culture and other aspects, the construction of national image is very important for a country, which affects the domestic national cohesion and the relationship between foreign countries.

Studies of Multimodal Metaphor

In the 1990s, a group of scholars represented by Forceville (1996) extended the study of conceptual metaphor from the verbal level to the pictorial level, and made a systematic study of pictorial metaphor. After that, Foreceville and Urios-Aparisi(2009) published *Multimodal Metaphor* which marked the establishment of multimodal metaphor theory. Since then, there has been an obvious multimodal turn in the study of conceptual metaphor and metonymy. The representation of metaphor and metonymy in nonverbal media has attracted scholars' extensive attention.

The theoretical basis is mainly a combination of classic and cutting-edge. In people's traditional concept, metaphor is a way of rhetoric. But with the continuous development of social culture, people find that it is not only a way of rhetoric, but also a way of thinking. Lakoff and Johnson constructed the "Conceptual Metaphor Theory" in the *Metaphors We Live By*, which introduced the basic knowledge of metaphor and mainly introduced conceptual metaphor and its three categories. The cognitive and rhetorical devices introduced in the book are the cornerstone of metaphor learning.

Studies of Multimodal Metaphor Abroad

Foreign research on multimodal metaphor germinates at an early time, which can be traced back to the 1970s. It is driven by three factors: the weakness of the research on verbal metaphor in cognitive linguistics, the diversion of research on multimodal discourse generated by the popularization of multimodal communications, and the trend of interdisciplinary research on humanities. Later, it has developed fast, with various disciplines included so far. Now, relevant studies will be reviewed chronologically as follows.

As a matter of fact, the research on multimodal metaphor originates from that on pictorial metaphor in the 1970s. Goodman (1976) expands previous investigation in structural linguistics, and integrates it with intensive examination of nonverbal symbol systems, from pictorial representation on the one hand to musical notation on the other. In the1980s, Kennedy (1982) discovers the correspondence between verbal and pictorial metaphors, and further points out that it depends on individual features of objects and such physical parameters as the change of scale. These studies show the new direction in metaphor for the later researchers.

Based on metaphor theory, Forceville, the originator of multimodal metaphor, used metaphor to explain advertising images in his *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising*. He believed that text and image were complementary to each other. Forceville and Urios-Aparisi co-edited their landmark 2009 book *Multimodal Metaphors*, in which they subdivided metaphors into single-modal and multimodal: "Target domain and source domain of single-modal metaphor appear in different modes", while "multimodal metaphor represents source domain and target domain in a comprehensive form of multiple elements". Scholars led by Forceville broke the shackles of traditional metaphor research and extended the scope of metaphor research to more perspectives.

At present, the research of multimodal metaphor has two aspects. One aspect is multimodal discourse analysis based on Halliday's system-functional language. Based on this theory, it is reasonable to believe that in addition to language, other symbol systems also have the three meta-functions of social symbols. In the process

of corpus analysis, language features and the role of symbolic modes such as speech, color, image and animation in discourse are emphasized. On the other hand, based on cognitive linguistics, the representative figures are Forceville and Urios-Aparisi. They believe that metaphor can be used through a variety of symbols, not only language symbols, but also other symbolic forms, such as pictures, colors, music and other expressive symbols.

Studies of Multimodal Metaphor at Home

At the beginning, the research of multimodal metaphor in China mainly focused on the evaluation and discussion of foreign multimodal metaphor theories. After that, many scholars successively applied the two-domain mapping framework proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson to analyze multimodal discourse. Later, relevant scholars put forward that although the two-domain mapping framework is persuasive, the study of multimodal metaphor needs a theoretical model with universal meaning to interpret more abundant metaphorical phenomena in multimodal discourse. Therefore, Zhao Xiufeng incorporated the spatial integration theory of cognitive linguistics into the analysis of multimodal metaphor, and proposed an integration model of multimodal metaphor and interpretation. Later, Zhao Xiufeng applied the cognitive poetics theory to the analysis of the emotional representation of multimodal metaphor, which enriched and developed the research perspective of multimodal metaphor theory. In the interdisciplinary field, Wang Hong analyzes the application of multimodal metaphor as a teaching strategy in the second language classroom from the perspective of second language acquisition.

After 2010, a large number of research papers using multimodal metaphor analysis method to analyze cases of different language categories have flooded into China, mainly including advertising (e.g. Lan Chun, Cai Ying, 2013), comics (e.g. Liu Yi, Liu Ping, 2019), promotional videos (e.g. Pan Yanyan, Zhang Hui, 2013) and sign language (e.g. Jiang Guiying, Wang Ronghua, 2013). The above multimodal metaphor research combines linguistics with semiotics, communication, film, advertising and other disciplines, showing interdisciplinary characteristics. In recent years, scholars in the field of linguistics begin to pay attention to the field combined with current political communication, and the study of China's national image has become a hot spot. Through literature search, it can be found that the research on multimodal metaphor of national image in China focuses on the analysis of a specific cultural propaganda film in terms of corpus selection. A small number of studies on the image building of China in periodical covers pay more attention to illustrated articles or cartoons in foreign media such as *The Economist and Time*.

Studies of National Image

As for the definition and function of national image, domestic and foreign scholars have made similar elaboration from two parts: the internal and external cognition of a country and the internal and external communication of national information. According to Kenneth E. Boulding (1959), an American scholar who was the first to study the concept of national image, it is not only a country's citizens' assessment of its own country, but also that of foreign citizens. In addition, in the view of domestic scholar Sun Youzhong (2002), "the quality of a national image fundamentally depends on the comprehensive national strength of a country, but after combining the national image with mass communication, the national image can be shaped to a certain

extent". It can be seen that the concept of national image emphasizes the public's cognition and evaluation of a country, and at the same time, the use of media to shape the national image is also crucial.

Most of the researches on national image positioning are conducted by domestic scholars, who discuss the determinants of national image positioning based on national history and national conditions. Xie Xiaojuan (2004) has studied the issues related to the positioning of national image. In her view, "the positioning of national image should consider the following factors: first, the concept of diplomacy exclusive to the country; second, nationality; the third is ideological, but no matter what kind of positioning must be based on the speed, quality and structure of the development of the country and society itself". It can be seen that while carrying out the national image publicity, it should combine the comprehensive strength of the country and reflect the truth and comprehensiveness of the country.

As for the study of China's national image, in the 1970s, a group of Chinese and western scholars emerged to study China's national image, but they all interpreted China's national image from the standpoint and angle of their own countries. In the view of western scholars, China's national image has serious "stereotype". However, at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, with the change of the international situation and the improvement of China's comprehensive national strength, western scholars gradually tended to study China's national image in multiple aspects and deeper levels. However, these studies were not based on China's real national conditions and actual features, so there was a certain bias in the portrayal of China's national image. At the same time, many domestic scholars have also conducted research on the topic of China's national image, which mainly discusses from the two aspects of pointing out the false construction of China's national image in the west and how to better construct and maintain China's national image under the environment of media changes. For example, Liu Xinlan's Discussion on the Cross-cultural Construction of China's National Image under the New Media Environment in 2021 shows that under the environment of new media, China should master its own right to speak and actively carry out international communication, so as to promote the construction of a good national image.

Conclusion

The study of multimodal metaphor abroad began earlier, that is, in the 1970s, while the study of multimodal metaphor in China began later, in the early 21st century. Foreign research on multimodal metaphor started from the study of graphic metaphor. According to the papers published by domestic scholars, it can be concluded that the initial domestic research was the evaluation and discussion of foreign research, and the early research mainly focused on the combination of multimodal metaphor with advertising, political cartoons and propaganda documentaries. It is a study and development of western theory localization in China. Finally, despite the differences between domestic and foreign studies, it is undeniable that there are similar research focuses and research areas. Researchers at home and abroad have studied the discourse nature, characteristics, similarity representation and the relationship between multimodal metaphor and metonymy. In these aspects, the genre of discourse is particularly prominent, from pictures to advertisements, cartoons and comics, music, gestures, movies, etc.

However, less attention has been paid to live events, and even less to the opening ceremony, but the scope of the research continues to expand. If any, the research is limited to the live performance of large-scale

sporting events, such as the performance of the opening ceremony of the London Olympic Games, and does not explore economic or political events. Therefore, in order to fill the gap of research discourse, this paper attempts to analyze the construction of multimodal metaphors in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. It is expected to provide a reference for the opening ceremony of the competition and the promotion of national culture, and systematically analyze and reveal the national image of China that it has shaped and spread from the perspective of multimodal metaphor.

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