The Images of China in Political Cartoons of Foreign Media

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to conduct a multimodal discourse analysis of a corpus of 10 political cartoons with animals about China published in foreign media. It was guided by the qualitative research design employing discourse analysis as an approach, specifically employing descriptive and analytical techniques to explore how foreign media conveyed the hidden cultural connotations and communicative intentions to the world in political cartoons through multimodal discourse analysis from the perspective of function and cognition and finally revealed the images of China in political cartoons of foreign media. This study grounded its analysis and discussion on generic features, semiotic resources utilized, relationship among semiotic modes, three meta-functions construed, metaphors, images of China construed, and finally proposed a functional-cognitive analytical framework for political cartoons. The findings revealed the cultural connotations in political cartoons were meant to create a specific negative impression of China, and to convey a particular political message to the viewers. The communicative intentions were to shape and promote China’s political, economic, military threats, hegemony in all aspects, and construed the images of China as economically, politically, and militarily threatening, domineering, hypocritical, bullying, cunning and greedy, which was catered to the foreign ideological purpose of “China Threat Theory”.

Keywords

Semiotic Modes, Generic Features, Visual Grammar, Metaphor, Images, Political Cartoon (Hereafter PC)
1. Introduction

PC, as a unique form of art, is image published by the media, which is usually combined with verbal mode utilized by the media as a direct commentary on current events (Douglas & Malti-Douglas, 1994). It falls into the typical multimodal discourse with more than one semiotic mode involved. It can be often regarded as doing communicative work which essentially upholds and strengthens the stratified organization of media (Simon, 2022), whereas it is often considered as a genre which is not worthy of serious commentary and criticism (Barajas, 2000). However, the mainstream of multimodality in discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Machin, 2007) and the development of frameworks and approaches of discourse analysis relevant to visual communication enable the viewers to appreciate the complexity of discourse features and different levels of communication.

However, research on PCs from linguistics is quite few. The existing research mainly focus on three aspects: (1) the functions, features, humors of PCs (Al-Masri, 2010; Issa, 2016; Katz, 2022; Mateus, 2010; Mowafy, 2022; Oluremi & Ajepe, 2010; Palmeri, 2009; Sani et al., 2012; Saygin, 2017; Schilperoord & Maes, 2009; Soare, 2019; Swanick, 2018; Tsakona, 2009); (2) the semiotic aspect of PCs (Abdul, 2009; Almomani et al., 2010; Ghilzai, 2020; Mazid, 2008; Rehman, 2018; Stewart, 2010; Swain, 2012; Wu, 2018); (3) the cognitive aspect of PCs in metaphor, conceptual blending (Abdel-Raheem, 2020; Alousque, 2013; Baek, 2016; El Refaie, 2003; Forceville, 1996; Krstić et al., 2019; Marín-Arrese, 2019; García, 2019; Saito & Chiang, 2020).

With the development of discourse analysis transferring to multimodal discourse analysis, multimodality has aroused the researchers’ attention and interests, such as in the multimodal interactional analysis from interactive sociology (Norris, 2004; Scollon & Scollon, 2004), in the multimodal discourse analysis from social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; O’Halloran, 2004, 2011; O’Toole, 1994; van Leeuwen, 2005), in the multimodal discourse analysis from cognitive linguistics (Forceville, 1996; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Although multimodality has aroused the researchers’ attention and interests, research on PCs in the multimodal discourse analysis are relatively scarce. The current research just primarily concentrates on the cognitive perspective to do the multimodal discourse analysis (Alousque, 2013; Baek, 2016; El Refaie, 2003; García, 2019). Discourse analysis needs not only a cognitive perspective, but also a social perspective. As Hart (2018) put forward, the main goals of cognitive aspect for discourse analysis include revealing the ideology and legalization latent in the cognitive construction aroused using specific semiotic resources in the social and political context. The meaning construction is the process by which someone makes the discourse has a certain ideology and can mobilize readers to produce certain social behaviors (Chilton, 2005). The cognitive perspective and the functional perspective can learn from each other and complement each other. Discourse not only represents mind, but also represents society through
mind. Therefore, the construed meaning in multimodal discourse needs to be further studied socially, culturally, and cognitively.

However, at present, the comprehensive perspective of multimodal discourse analysis is still in its infancy and exploratory stage, and the research results are very limited. For example, Feng Dezheng (2011) explained the construction and classification of image metaphor and multimodal metaphor by using the systemic functional theory, and analyzed the representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning and metaphor, regarding the meta-functional resources of visual images as metaphor potential. Feng and O’Halloran (2013) analyzed the visual presentation of metaphor from the perspective of social semiotics and explained the position of lens and the cognitive mechanism of combining to construct meaning. Pan Yanyan (2019) made a multimodal cognitive critical analysis of Chinese and American military recruitment propaganda films, and revealed the differences in narrative mode, discourse strategy and ideology between Chinese and American military recruitment propaganda films based on metaphor and metonymy analysis. Lin Baozhu (2019) combined social semiotics and metaphor theory to propose a complementary multi-modal metaphor discourse analysis model integrating social, cognitive and intersubjectivity, to maximize the effectiveness and strength of multi-modal discourse analysis. Zhang Hui and Yan Bing (2019) discussed the construction of discourse space and the transformation of “reference center” of Syrian war discourse on the axis of space, time and value by combining the domain convergence theory of discourse space theory, revealed the different discourse strategies of the United States, Syria and China, and pointed out that in the discourse of political conflict, the speakers at the center of different referents choose corresponding language manipulation strategies to achieve different political goals, which implies different positions and viewpoints.

Multimodal discourse analysis based on social semiotics and multimodal discourse analysis based on the theory of cognitive linguistics are two levels of multimodal discourse analysis. The two are not contradictory, but complementary to a certain extent. Systemic Functional Linguistics provides us with the methodological tools to answer questions which provide a description of a discourse (Young et al., 2018). Cognitive linguistics provides a new perspective for the description of the symbolic meaning of multimodal discourse. As the perspective of social semiotics and cognitive linguistics that are the most focused in the current research on multimodal discourse analysis, this research proposed to analyze and study multimodal discourse from a functional and cognitive perspective.

Currently, the reported country in PCs have been mainly focused on Arab (Issa, 2016), Egypt (Abdel-Raheem, 2020), France (Alousque, 2013), Nigeria (Oluremi, 2019; Sani et al., 2012), Serbia (Krstić et al., 2019), Syria (Baek, 2016). No research draws attention to the PCs about the reported country China in foreign media systematically.
Based on visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006), and metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Forceville, 1996), this study attempted to conduct multimodal discourse analysis of a corpus of 10 PCs with animals about the reported country China published in foreign media. This descriptive qualitative research explored how foreign media conveyed the hidden cultural connotations and communicative intentions to the world in PCs through multimodal discourse analysis from the dual perspectives (function and cognition) and finally revealed the images of China in PCs of foreign media. The study grounded its analysis and discussion on generic features, semiotic resources utilized, relationship among semiotic modes, three meta-functional meanings construed, metaphors, images of China construed and finally proposed a functional-cognitive analytical framework for PCs.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Visual Grammar

This theory contains representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning respectively corresponding to ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning in systemic functional grammar.

Representational meaning is the ability of semiotic systems to represent objects and their relations in a world which is outside the represented system or in the symbolic system of a culture (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). It can be further divided into narrative representation and conceptual representation in terms of the existence of vector. When participants are connected by a vector, they are represented as doing something to or for each other, such vectorial pattern is narrative (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Vector is the hallmark of a narrative visual proposition. A vector in pictures is formed by depicted elements from an oblique line, which is often a quite strong, diagonal line (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). If the line can give directions, it can be considered as a vector, such as an eyeline, finger and so on. The narrative process can be further subdivided into action process, reactional process, speech and mental process. In action process, depicted participants are connected by vector which indicates they are doing something to or for each other. It usually contains two participants: Actor and Goal. The Actor is the participant from which the vector emanates, or which itself, wholly or partially forms the vector. The Goal is the represented participant at whom the vector is directed (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In reactional process, it possesses two represented participants, Reacter and Phenomenon connected by a vector which the eyeline is formed by the Reacter. The Reacter is the participant who does the looking, who must necessarily be human, or a human-like animal, and the phenomenon may be formed by another participant, at whom or which the Reacter is looking, or by a whole visual proposition (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In speech and mental process, meaning is established through the protrusion of the thought balloons and dialogue balloons. The vector in speech and mental process is a slant connecting thinking or dialogue b-
ble with the speaker or the thinker, by which the contents of the speaking or the thinking is projected. Conceptual process “represents represented participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning, in other word, in terms of their generalized and more or less stable and timeless events” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: p. 59). It can be further classified into three types of processes including classificational process, analytical process, and symbolic process.

Interactive meaning is the interaction between represented participants and interactive participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Four elements can be used to realize the interactive meaning, namely contact, social distance, attitude, and modality. Contact is an imaginary interpersonal relationship established by eye-line between the represented participant and the image viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). When presented participants look at the viewers, vectors, formed by participants’ eyelines, connect the participants with the viewer and contact is established. Contact can be further classified into demanding image and offering image. When the represented participants look directly at the imaginary image viewer, they can demand something from the image viewer through their facial expressions and gestures. This kind of image is a demand. While when the represented participants do not look directly at the viewer, they just offer some information to the image viewer. It is an offer, which offers the represented participants to the image viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation without requiring viewers to carry out any action. Social distance is connected to the “size of frame”, to the choice between “close-up, medium shot and long shot” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: p.124). It can determine the distance we keep from each other. Attitude is mainly construed by perspective, through which images bring about the relations between represented participants and the image viewers. Perspective is the involvement by the image viewers and the power relations between the represented participants and the image viewers through angle or point of view (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The selection of an angle can imply the possibilities of expressing subjective attitudes towards represented participants. Different perspectives can represent different attitudes. Two types of angles are proposed for the analysis of attitude in the images: horizontal angle and vertical angle. Modality is the intermediate choices between yes and no, which indicates the truth value or credibility of statements about the world. Modality in visual modes has two degrees, high degree and low degree (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006).

Compositional meaning is the representational and interactive meanings of the image to each other through three interrelated systems, which are information value, salience, and framing. Information value is related to the layout of the represented participants in the image. Different positions of represented participants in image represent various meanings. Three sub-type compositions left and right, top and bottom, and center and margin, are proposed (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The left and right composition displays the elements are arranged on horizontal axis, and the left means given information, the right means...
new information. The top and bottom composition demonstrates that the elements are arranged on vertical axis, and the top represents ideal information, the bottom represents real information. The center and margin composition represents the most nuclear information and the less important information respectively. Salience is the most noticeable elements in the image which can attract the interactive participants’ attention (Machin, 2007). It can create “a hierarchy of importance among the elements” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: p. 201). It results from complex interaction between many factors, such as size, color, tone, focus, perspective, overlap, etc. Frame indicates the devices that connect or disconnect the elements of an image. The devices are realized by elements which can create dividing lines, or by actual frame lines.

2.2. Metaphor Theory

Metaphor, rather than being a merely decorative language device, is considered as an essentially cognitive mechanism structuring much of human thought that is ubiquitous and indispensable (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It is built on the idea that the process of human thought is fundamentally metaphorical, which is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: p. 5), which contains two domains: source domain and target domain. Source domain is a conceptual domain helping readers to understand the other domain, and the domain understood in this way is named target domain. Conceptual metaphor can be regarded as the projection from the source domain to the target domain from the perspective of cognition. Metaphor is how the human brain associates a usually abstract entity with another, usually a more concrete entity (Koller, 2009). Fauconnier and Turner (2002) pointed out that the processes by which mental models of these metaphorically structures are produced have been theorized as a mapping from a source domain to a target domain, or as a blend of two or more input spaces.

In contrast with monomodal metaphors “whose target and source are exclusively or predominantly rendered in one mode”, multimodal metaphors are claimed as metaphors “whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes” (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009: p. 384). El Refaie (2009) supported the idea that a multimodal metaphor is a cognitive process in which two domains are represented in two different modes. The working mechanism of multimodal metaphor is similar to that of conceptual metaphor, which is a mapping process from source domain to target domain.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study was guided by the qualitative research design employing discourse analysis as an approach, specifically employing descriptive and analytical techniques. It utilized the theory of visual grammar and metaphor theory to do the multimodal discourse analysis.
3.2. Corpus of the Study

In selecting the PCs, the researcher set the inclusion criteria to ensure the authenticity of the data. The following criteria were employed: 1) the PCs were with animals about China; 2) the PCs manifested different animals about China; 3) the PCs were created by foreigners not by Chinese; 4) the samples selected included the colored version of the cartoons as well as the black-and-white version; 5) the chosen PCs were manifested in different forms; 6) the collected cartoons were published in different foreign media from 2001 to 2021; 7) the selected PCs could reflect different fields such as in foreign policy, economy, society, democracy, etc.

Finally, the sources of data in the research were the PCs with animals about China in foreign media which were downloaded from the largest searchable engine Google. In this study, 10 PCs were set up for a principled collection of small-sized corpus in Table 1.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data collected were tallied and treated using the following analytic tools:

- Generic analysis. The researcher analyzed the corpus of 10 PCs in terms of discourse form, discourse style, discourse ideograph, discourse convention. This analysis was the first step towards PC analysis.
- Visual grammar. The researcher utilized visual grammar to explore PCs from the functional perspective to interpret and explain meaning construction of all semiotic resources in the PCs.
- Metaphor theory. The researcher utilized conceptual metaphor theory and multimodal metaphor theory to analyze PCs from the cognitive mechanism and explored the foreign typical cognitive way through the PCs, in which the researcher followed three steps: metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation, and metaphor explanation. Step one focused mainly on identifying and examining the metaphors in the PCs and tried to answer the questions on the source and target domain, modes presented, types of metaphor. Step two focused on clarifying and interpreting metaphors with cognitive and pragmatic factors. Step three focused on metaphor explanation and evaluation to identify the motivations of metaphor.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Generic Features of PCs Contained in the Artifacts

4.1.1 Discourse Form

PC is a visual multimodal discourse involved with two semiotic modes of image and linguistic text. Images occupied most of the space of the whole PC and became the most prominent and eye-catching semiotic mode and linguistic text played an auxiliary explanatory role to images in PC. Two animals (dragon and panda) are involved to represent China. Uncle Sam is used to represent the United States. The Head of state is also used to represent a country, for example,
Table 1. List of 10 PCs in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC1</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Comic 1" /></td>
<td>Honolulu Weekly 4-11-01 “Bush takes a blast from China” by John S. Pritchett, 2001 <a href="http://www.pritchettcartoons.com/china.htm">http://www.pritchettcartoons.com/china.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC3</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Comic 3" /></td>
<td>Stock-Markets/Financial Markets; Back to the 1998 Crisis, Subprime’s to Impact for a Long-time by John Mauldin 2007 <a href="http://www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article1792.html">http://www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article1792.html</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continued

**PC6**

Washington Times; Business Insider
China’s peaceful rise in the eyes of America, with the flash-light being the Pentagon by Paresh;
The world worries about the U.S. Jobs crisis 2010
[https://www.businessinsider.com/political-cartoons-president-obama-jobs-chinese-debt-2011-9#and-here-are-some-other-cartoons-20](https://www.businessinsider.com/political-cartoons-president-obama-jobs-chinese-debt-2011-9#and-here-are-some-other-cartoons-20)

**PC7**

Washington Times
China’s Rise in chinaSMACK published by Joe
2010

**PC8**

The Palm Beach Post
Washington Post Writers Group by Lisa Benson
2021

**PC9**

Toronto Star –by Theo Moudakis: China threats
2019

**PC10**

Victorville Daily Press
China burning books by Dave Granlund
2020
the image of American president represents the United States, and the image of Canadian Prime Minister represents Canada.

From the descriptions towards each PCs, two semiotic modes, image and linguistic text are involved in PCs, which is the typical multimodal discourse (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006; Forceville, 1996).

4.1.2. Discourse Style
PC is utilized artistic techniques such as exaggeration, satire, contrast, and anthropomorphism to inform the public about current issues and events, deriving the logic of sensible condensed reality, interpreting the complex and confusing social phenomena to the world, and guiding the direction of the viewers’ cognitive thinking, which are supported by the study of Jimoh (2010) and Lusekelo (2023).

Stylistically, PCs were presented in a striking, original or humorous way with the help of artistic techniques to condense reality and present it as laughable, silly, absurd, and imaginary scenarios that attempt to explain complex and confusing phenomena. This is supported by Abraham (2009) and Palmeri (2009).

4.1.3. Discourse Convention
PC is a kind of satirical or negative image to criticize reality (Al-Masri, 2010; Conners, 1998, 2005). Through the negation of ugliness, the affirmation of beauty is achieved, so that the viewers of PC can re-understand the real characters or events involved in PC, trigger thinking, produce rational understanding and shocking resonance. It is instructively characterized by the reproduction and reconstruction of images on social and psychological reality. In these 10 PCs, it could be found that cartoonists processed and depicted the subjects of things or events through the satirical means to disclose the negative images of dragon and panda and criticize the actions or behaviors from dragon and panda. For example, the image producers used the satirical method to depict the ugliness of cartoons, and viewers could analyze and judge the ugly images of dragon and panda and affirm the beauty of other figures in PCs through the negation of ugliness.

Humorous way could be employed by image producer to achieve the discourse convention (Kruipers, 2011; Mowafy, 2022). For example, in PC3, the big dragon was holding the gate of reservoir engraved with “DANGER” to threaten Uncle Sam, which is a negative behavior and should be criticized. PC9 was to depict panda’s behavior of act of control over the man, for the giant faceless panda was holding the man tightly in his palm, which is known to all that this kind of act could not happen in actual life. This PC demonstrated that the negative image of panda and panda’s act of control could be blamed by the viewers.

4.1.4. Discourse Ideograph
In the image, abstract ideograph can be visualized, becoming images that reflect ideas (Forceville, 1996). The ideograph visualized the abstract concept and provided a visualization vehicle for the thematic discussion of PC, visualizing the abstract concept PC China as a concrete ANIMAL, dragon, or panda. It was
noted that some visual elements such as the emblem of the Communist Party of
China in PC4, the five-star on the hat in PC8, PC9, PC13 and the national flag of
China in PC6 were further supported the ideograph of China. The animal in PC
activated and created the precipitation of visual imagery and formed a stable
connection with China. It formed a concept of meaning that carried a rich con-
notation and provided a way to insight into the deeper social culture behind the
visual symbol.

The ideograph for the United States in PCs was typically represented by Uncle
Sam such as in PC3, PC7, PC10, who is a popular figure of the United States
government in American culture and a manifestation of patriotic emotion, and
American president such as in PC1 and PC11. The ideograph for Canada in PC9
was represented by Canadian Prime Minister.

4.2. Semiotic Resources Employed in PCs

Two kinds of semiotic resources were employed in PCs, specifically, image and
linguistic text. Hence, PC is a typical multimodal discourse, which utilizes more
than one semiotic mode in the design of a semiotic product or event (Kress &

4.3. Relationship among Semiotic Modes in PCs

The relationship between image and linguistic text was complementary in the
construction of the overall meaning of PC. The two modes which were indi-
sispensable together expressed the overall meaning of the image producer, and the
absence of either mode would be incomplete. In PCs, the most distinguished
authoritative language is yielded to the image (Kress, 2010).

Image became the main and the most prominent semiotic mode utilized to
express meaning in PCs. Far from being the sum of meanings added between
independent elements, the meaning produced by images conferred a richer ex-
perience. The textual description in PCs played an auxiliary explanatory role and
its discourse purpose guided viewers to interpret the cartoons. The main role of
linguistic mode was to anchor, which fixed the polysemy of an image into a defi-
nite meaning. For example, in the 10 PCs, both dragon and panda had the cha-
acters “CHINA”. Without the characters “CHINA”, the viewers might not be
sure that dragon or panda represented China. Therefore, it is necessary to find a
suitable way to fix the meaning of images, and the most important means is to
attach language information. Another role of linguistic mode in PCs was to re-
lay, to attach explanations, descriptions to the existing meaning of the image.

4.4. Meanings Constructed in PCs

4.4.1. Representational Meaning

1) Narrative Representation

PC1 has three vectors to compose the narrative representation. Vector 1 is
composed of the eyelines between “dragon” and timid “man”, which is a transi-
tive narrative image representing the Reactional process. “Dragon” is the Reacter
who does the looking to emanate the vector and could be regarded as the represented participant. “Dragon” is looking at the little black man angrily, so timid “the man” is the represented participant Phenomenon at whom the Reactor “dragon” is looking. In the process of looking at “the man”, three smoke clouds on the head of “dragon”, indicating that “dragon” is angry with “the man”, so vector 2 is formed by oblique protrusion of “three clouds” connecting with the angry breath from “dragon”. It is inner Mental process, with Senser to be “dragon”, and the Phenomenon sensed to be “three clouds”. Vector 3 is composed by the dialogue between “the man” and “dragon”, which is the oblique protrusion of the dialogue balloon that connects speaker to their speech. This case belongs to Speech process, with the Sayer “the man” who emanates the dialogue balloon, and the verbal in the dialogue balloon to be Utterance, which is the speech content, that is “THIS COULD DAMAGE OUR RELATIONSHIP”. From the size, position, background, color saturation, salience, focus and psychological prominence of the dragon shape in the composition, “dragon” is the most prominent represented participant.

In PC2, there are 3 vectors in the narration to compose narrative representation. Vector 1 is formed by dragon’s hands and back pushing against the door and hence a sense of vectoriality. It is the Action process, in which dragon the Actor is the participant from whom the vector departs, and the action pushing against the door is done to the Statue of Liberty, which is the Goal. The dragon did not want to let the Statue of Liberty come in. Vector 2 is formed by the strong diagonal line from the man’s finger pointing to the Statue of Liberty. It is ascribed to the Action process. The Actor is the man with the handbag, and the Goal is the Statue of Liberty. The man pointed to the Statue of Liberty and told the dragon that she was with me. Vector 3 is shaped by the dialogue balloon that connects drawings of speaker to his speech. It is the Speech process.

In PC3, the title is “USA & CHINA TALK MONEY”. A sign stuck in the middle of the reservoir reads “$1.33 TRILLION RESERVES.” The gate of the reservoir is marked “DANGER”. There are 3 vectors involved in the narrative representation. Vector 1 is formed by directionality between the dragon’s finger pointing to Uncle Sam. It is the Action process, with the dragon to be the Actor to depart vector and the Goal to aim at Uncle Sam. This narrative structure tells the viewers that Uncle Sam is warned to bring his swimming trunks because of danger done by the dragon. Vector 2 is the oblique protrusions of thought balloon that connects drawings of Uncle Sam to his thought. It is Mental process, with Uncle Sam to be the Senser, and the verbal enclosed in the thought balloon to the Phenomenon. The thought balloon is a warning to dragon for trade sanctions. So, Uncle Sam requires dragon to fix the Yuan. Vector 3 is the dialogue balloons that join drawing of speaker to his speech. It is Speech process, with the dragon to be Sayer, and the verbal enclosed in dialogue balloons to be Utterance. The Utterance connotes that the dragon is not afraid of Uncle Sam.

PC4 is the reflection of countries working together to protect the environment
and prevent climate change. But it is depicted that a “Chinese dragon” in sheep’s clothing avoid the responsibility of air pollution. In terms of global CO₂ emissions, China claimed that it is a developing country and should have the rights of a developing country, but the United States argued that China is actually a developed country and should not enjoy the rights of a developing country. It is an internationally recognized fact that China is a developing country. In PC4, represented participant “dragon” communicates with the interactive participants viewers. Only one vector is shaped in the narration structure. The oblique protrusion of the dialogue balloon connects the speaker to his speech. It belongs to the Speech process, with the dragon to be the Sayer, and the dialogue balloon “THEY CAN’T SEE THE REAL ‘ME’…” to be the Utterance. The text message reflects China’s deliberate concealment of its failure to fulfill its environmental commitments, highlighting China’s cunning. Hence, the paper with the words “COMMITMENTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE” is contradictory to the content of the dialogue balloon. The dragon has become the most central object of the PC, which fully embodies the image of China in the minds of the cartoonist.

PC5 is about panda the “LANDLORD” seeking U.S. to collect debt, which shows that panda as the “LANDLORD” is very angry with the US debt. Three vectors are concerned in the narration structure. Vector 1 is composed of panda knocking on the door, which is a transitive narrative image representing the Action process. The represented participant panda is the participant from which the vector emanates, and the Goal is the door. Vector 2 is formed by the eyeline by the direction of the represented participant panda to the potential image viewers. It is a non-transitive narrative image representing the Reactional process, with the panda to be the Reacter, and no Phenomenon. It is the non-transactional reaction that the eyeline vector emanates from the Reactor but does not point at another participant. It is then left the potential viewers to imagine what he is thinking about or looking at, and this can create a powerful sense of identification with the represented participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). Vector 3 is shaped by the dialogue balloon. It is the Speech process, with the panda to be the Sayer, and the verbal enclosed in the dialogue balloon to be the Utterance. From the above three vectors, it is shown that panda has become the core object in PC5, no matter in the narrative Actional process, the narrative Reactive process, or the narrative Mental process.

PC6 is about China’s peaceful rise in the eyes of America, which arouses the world worries from the missile heads in the body of dragon. The image of dragon with the missile heads in the body is a sarcasm towards “China’s ‘peaceful development’”. Two vectors are shaped in the narrative structure. Vector 1 is formed by the strong diagonal lines from the light of flashlight hitting the dragon. It is the narrative Action process, with the flashlight being the Pentagon to be the Actor, and the dragon to be the Goal. Vector 2 is shaped by the eyeline from the dragon to the interactive participant’s image viewers. It is the Reactional process, with the dragon to be the Reacter and on Phenomenon concerned.
This case is ascribed to non-transactional reaction (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). In this Reactional process, the image creator cropped photos back to close-ups of non-transactional Reacter, which becomes a source of representational manipulation. Here, a caption “Highlighting China’s ‘peaceful Development’” may suggest what the Reacter is looking at, but actually speaking, it is not what the Reacter was actually looking at when the PC was taken.

PC7 depicts about the ironic partnership between China and the United States, which depicts China to be the backstabber. The five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence have not only become the basis for China’s independent foreign policy of peace but have also been accepted by many countries in the world and become important norms governing international relations. Two vectors are formed in the narrative structure. Vector 1 is the diagonal line created when the dragon stepped on Uncle Sam’s tuxedo causing his feet to hang in the air. It is the narrative Action process. The dragon is the Actor who emanates the vector, and Uncle Sam is the Goal at which the vector is directed. Vector 2 is the dialogue balloon from Uncle Sam to dragon that connects Uncle Sam to his speech. It is the Speech process, with Uncle Sam to be the Sayer, and the verbal enclosed in the dialogue balloon to be the Utterance.

PC8 is about the foreign countries accusing China of cyber theft. Two vectors are narrated in PC8. Vector 1 is the directionality from four persons’ finger pointing at the dragon. This narrative visual proposition is the Action process, with four persons who emanate the vector to be the Actor, and the dragon, who is the represented participant at whom the vector is directed, to be the Goal. So, the narrative structure is that four persons accuse dragon’s cyber theft. Vector 2 is the speech vector, which is the oblique protrusion of dialogue balloon that connects speaker to his speech. It is the Speech process, with the dragon to be the Sayer, and the verbal enclosed in the dialogue balloon to be the Utterance. The dragon becomes the focus object in PC8.

PC9 depicted by the Canadian cartoonist Theo Moudakis is about China threats to Canada, which is a country in NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). The NAFTA was enacted in 1994 and created a free trade zone for Mexico, Canada, and the United States. All tariffs and quotas were eliminated on U.S. exports to Mexico and Canada under NAFTA. Two vectors are designed in PC9. Vector 1 is the formed by an eyeline from panda to the man. It is the Reactional process, with the panda to be the Reacter, and the man to be the Phenomenon. The panda depicted in PC is so angry with the man he has a tight grip. Vector 2 is the thought balloon that connects the man to his thought. It is the narrative Mental process, with the man to be the Senser, and the verbal enclosed in the thought balloon to be the Phenomenon. The verbal meaning in the thought balloon discloses Panda threats to the man for not just one time, because the man had the experience of thinking that a new situation has occurred
before.

PC10 was published in Victorville Daily Press on July 7, 2020 by Staff Writer, which was about China’s attitude towards democracy. Only one vector is shaped in the narration. The vector is the directionality from the fire to the book, which is the narrative transactional Actional process, with the dragon who starts the vectoriality to be the Actor, and the book who receives the vector to be the Phenomenon. The narrative structure tells the image viewer, the dragon was so angry with Hong Kong’s democracy that he sprayed the fire to burn “HONG KONG LIBRARY BOOKS ON DEMOCRACY”. It hints that the foreign media condemned the dragon who represents China on his democracy.

Table 2 displays the distribution of narrative processes in PCs.

2) Conceptual Representation

Vector is the hallmark of narrative visual proposition, which can be rendered to differentiate narrative representation and conceptual representation. Narrative structures always have one, conceptual structures never do (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). Because in each of the 10 PCs, there is at least one vector according to the researcher’s analysis of narrative representation, there is no conceptual representation of representational meaning realized in these 10 PCs.

4.4.2. Interactive Meaning

1) Contact

Contact can be further classified into demand image and offer image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). When the represented participants look directly at the imaginary image viewer, they can demand something from the image viewer through

Table 2. Distribution of narrative processes in PCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Representation in PC (NRPC)</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Reactional</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Mental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRPC1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC9</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRPC10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PC was employed narrative structures to unfold the representational meaning. The Action processes were widely used, accounting for the highest.
their facial expressions and gestures. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) considered this kind of image as a “demand”. While when the represented participants do not look directly at the viewer, they just offer some information to the image viewer. Followed Halliday (1985), It is regarded as an “offer” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006), which offers the represented participants to the image viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation without requiring viewers to carry out any action. Hence, images can represent image acts as well as social relations.

In these 10 PCs, there are 7 offer images, and only 3 demand images. Table 3 shows the distribution of contact, and Table 4 provides the details of contact.

**Table 3.** Distribution of contact in PCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Offer Image</th>
<th>Demand Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC1, PC2, PC3, PC7, PC8, PC9, PC10</td>
<td>PC4, PC5, PC6,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.** Details of contact in PCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Offer</th>
<th>Demand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC1</td>
<td>Dragon did bad things to the little black man, which manifested the bad characteristics of dragon.</td>
<td>The information demanded is that image viewer’s value judgments about the behavior of the dragon in sheep’s clothing. It displays the hypocritical and cunning character of the dragon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC2</td>
<td>The domineering dragon did not let the Statue of Liberty come in with the gentleman with the suitcase.</td>
<td>The panda with the look of evil spirits as the landlord demanded the rent due from the tenants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC3</td>
<td>The dragon could bring danger to Uncle Sam.</td>
<td>The dragon with the look of evil spirits persuaded the viewers to accept China’s peaceful development to the world with the missile head. It demonstrated the dragon’s threat to the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uncle Sam wanted the long live friendship with the dragon, but the cunning dragon was the one who damaged the friendship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC5</td>
<td></td>
<td>The cunning dragon who did the cyber theft, was scolded by the West.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC6</td>
<td></td>
<td>The panda’s control, which is a familiar aggressive threat, was recognizable to the man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC7</td>
<td></td>
<td>The angry dragon did not allow democracy to exist in Hong Kong, which displays the hegemonic trait of dragon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The image producer wanted to offer some information more to the image viewer than anything else. Through these PCs, the offering information could reflect the dragon’s or panda’s character, such as domineering, threatening, cunning, greed, evil, thievish, aggressive, to cater to the foreign ideological purpose of “China Threat Theory”.

2) Social Distance

Social distance can be categorized into intimate distance, personal distance, and impersonal distance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). As per intimate distance, the represented participant is set up in a close shot, and only the head or shoulder of represented participants can be watched by the viewers. A personal and close relationship between represented participants and viewers is established. In terms of personal distance, the represented participants can be described from the waist to the whole body. In this medium shot, the far personal distance is set up between represented participants and viewers. And in impersonal distance or far social distance, the whole person and its surrounding can be seen, and an impersonal relationship is established. Table 5 shows the distribution of social distance in PCs.

The number of impersonal distances indicates that image producers emphasized the logical thinking, attaching great importance to the functions of surrounding and background on the subjects, whereas it is difficult for the viewers to go into their inner world and gain other information. So, this kind of far social distance enlarged the distances between the represented participants and the image viewers.

The objective for the cartoonists to take the long shot to establish the impersonal distance is to objectify, convince, and persuade the image viewers to coincide with the sense conveyed in the PC (Saygin, 2017).

3) Attitude

The attitude analysis of the image can be reproduced from both the horizontal and vertical angles (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). Horizontal angle is a function of the relation between the frontal plane of the image producer and the frontal plane of the represented participants. It comprises frontal angle and oblique angle and the difference between them rests in the difference between involvement and detachment (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). Hence, the horizontal angle encodes whether the image producer or the viewer is involved with the represented participants or not. Table 6 shows the distribution of horizontal angle in PCs.

Table 5. Distribution of social distance in PCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Distance</th>
<th>PC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The intimate distance (the close shot)</td>
<td>PC4, PC9, PC10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personal distance (the medium shot)</td>
<td>PC1, PC2, PC3, PC5, PC6, PC7, PC8,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Distribution of horizontal angle in PCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horizontal Angle</th>
<th>PC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frontal Angle</td>
<td>PC4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oblique Angle</td>
<td>PC1, PC2, PC3, PC5, PC6, PC7, PC8, PC9, PC10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The oblique angle is illustrated as what you see is not part of our world; it is their world, something we are not involved with (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The foreign cartoonists took most oblique angles to detach the viewers from the represented participants, and the represented participants were just indulged in their own world and did not stress any personal emotion to the viewers. It indicated the fact that the image employed the oblique angle was real and objective, which could convince the viewers the truthfulness of the situation and appealed them to take actions to improve the situation. The frontal angle is regarded as what you see is part of our world, something we are involved with (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). When it is used in PC, it can involve the viewers into the represented participants and certain action, which can shorten the distance between the represented participants and the viewers and can influence the viewer’s inner world.

Vertical angle represents the power relationship between the interactive participants and the represented participants, which consists of high angle, low angle, and eye-level angle (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). If a represented participant is seen from a high angle, the relationship is depicted as one in which the interactive participants has power over the represented participants; if a represented participant is seen from a low angle, then the relationship is depicted as one in which the represented participant has power over the interactive participant; if a represented participant is seen from an eye-level angle, then the relationship is depicted as one in which the represented participant has an equality and no power involved with the interactive participant. Table 7 shows the distribution of vertical angle in PCs.

Adopting the low angle, that is from bottom up, from low to high framing method, could increase the vertical height of the represented participant, strengthen the overall vertical sense of the image, and help highlight the tall image of the represented participant. It could also purify the background space of the lens. The upshot represented participant could produce a special modeling effect. However, it appeared tall and deformed the character, causing psychological pressure on the image viewer. The main image was emphasized to form a tall and strong image, or a sense of power. The low angle of the upshot effectively conveyed a certain exaggerated meaning, forcing the viewer to look up to the dragon suggests an inferior position of the viewer or the important role of the dragon.

An eye-level angle reveals a sense of equality between the represented participant and the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). For example, in PC4, the image producer adopted the eye-level angle to the represented participant dragon,
Table 7. Distribution of Vertical Angle in PCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vertical Angle</th>
<th>PC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Angle</td>
<td>PC1, PC2, PC3, PC5, PC6, PC7, PC8, PC9, PC10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Angle</td>
<td>PC4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye-level Angle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

trying to ensure that the event in the PC was objective.

4) Modality

Modality is divided in visual modes into two degrees, including the high degree, and the low degree (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). An image with a high modality means more natural or truthful than that with low modality. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) proposed the naturalistic modality in terms of a series of “modality markers” continuums or scales (P105).

The use of color variation is an important method for expressing visual modality in which color is reduced, the lower the modality. As for modality marker—color saturation in these PCs, it runs from full color saturation with high modality in PC1, PC5, PC6, PC7, PC8, PC9, PC10, to the absence of color with low modality, black and white, in PC2, PC3, PC4. The image producers carefully designed the reproduction to maximize the represented participants in the cartoons, all of which are high modality creative techniques (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The result is a convincing effect on the authenticity of the message conveyed in the cartoons. As for modality marker—color differentiation, the cartoon producers maximally presented a diversified range of colors to show high modality, such as six colors in PC1, five colors in PC5, five colors in PC6, six colors in PC7, eight colors in PC8, six colors in PC9, seven colors in PC10. The use of different colors in the image is of higher real value (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The high modality in these PCs displayed the truthfulness of events to viewers. As for modality marker—color modulation, the image producers utilized fully modulated color with the use of many different shades of color to express high modality, such as the modulated yellow in PC1, PC5, PC6, the modulated green in PC5, the modulated red in PC7, PC8, PC10, and the modulated black in PC9.

In terms of modality marker—contextualization, refers to the degree to which a setting is presented in a visual (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In images, the absence of context will lower the modality and there is a continuum from the presentation of a full setting to no setting. The cartoon producers tried to use the most fully articulated and detailed background to express high modality, such as in the meticulous background of PC1, PC2, PC3, PC4, PC5, PC6, PC7, PC9, PC10. The extreme end is the absence of setting, which is totally unmodulated color, a black background, and most commonly, a blank or white background, such as in PC8.

As regard to modality marker—representation, the cartoon creators tried to
use the maximum representation of pictorial detail to articulate high modality, for example, the scales on dragons in PC1, PC2, PC3, PC6, PC7, PC8, PC10, the facial expressions of dragons in PC1, PC2, PC3, PC6, PC7, PC8, PC10, the facial expressions of pandas in PC5, PC9, the claws of dragons in PC1, PC2, PC3, PC4, PC6, PC7, PC8, PC10, the hands of pandas in PC5, PC9, dragon’s whiskers in PC1, PC2, PC4, PC6, PC7, PC8, dragon’s teeth in PC2, PC4, PC8, PC10, panda’s teeth in PC5, all represented the pictorial detail to the maximum.

As for modality marker—illumination, it is the scale running from the fullest representation of the play of light and shade to its absence (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In all these 10 PCs, the image producers employed the fullest representation of the play of light and shade to draw the viewers’ attention to particular aspects or participants within the visual frame to show high modality, for example, the viewers especially can see the light and shade in PC1, PC5, PC6, PC7.

As for modality marker—brightness, it is a scale running from a maximum number of different degrees of brightness to just only two, that of black and white, dark and lighter grey, or two brightness values of the same color (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Except PC2, PC3, PC4 utilized the black and white, the other PCs were represented with a maximum number of different degrees of brightness to show high modality.

According to the comprehensive analysis of modality markers in the PCs, the distribution of modality is concluded in Table 8.

An image with a high modality means more natural or truthful than that with low modality. It can express the image producer’s intention graphically and facilitate the viewers to understand the theme of PC better.

Although there are three PCs which were rendered low modality because of the black and white colors, the image producer represented the represented participants to the maximum from the background design, body shape design, expression design and many text descriptions, which are very meticulous and vivid. The complex background, the detailed composition, as well as contrasting light and shadow, light and dark design all reflect depth, shade, and brightness to show high modality.

4.4.3. Compositional Meaning

1) Information Value

There exists a close similarity between sequential information structure in language and horizontal structure in visual composition. According to the sequential information structure in language, the Given is on the left and the New is on the right (Halliday, 1994), which applies also within an image. The image is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. Distribution of modality in PCs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Modality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Modality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a transition from known information to new information from the left to the right, with the known information placed on the left and the new information placed on the right. The image from the center to the margin is the diffusion of the dominant information to other information around it. The element placed in the center has the function of core information, and the element placed in the margin plays the function of auxiliary core information. The image from the top to the bottom is the transition from the ideal to the real; the information placed on the top is the ideal, and the information placed at the bottom is the real. The ideal information is presented as the idealized or generalized essence and is the most salient part; the real information is presented as the more specific, more practical information (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Table 9 displays the distribution of information value in PCs.

The image producer preferred Center-Margin and Left-Right positions to show the information value in PCs. Besides Center-Margin and Left-Right, Top-Bottom position were also the ways to display information value in cartoon. It is also noticed that Top-Bottom and Left-Right could combine with Center-Margin. Dividing visual space according to this dimension resulted in the cross with the center in the middle, which is a fundamental spatial symbol in foreign culture, for example in PC1, PC5. Table 10 shows the position of information value in PCs.

The information value proved that the other element was threatened by the dragon or panda, such as in relationship, democracy, economy, climate, modernization, cyber safety, currency.

2) Salience

Salience, judged based on visual clues, is the most noticeable elements in the image which can attract the interactive participants’ attention (Machin, 2007). It can create a hierarchy of importance among the elements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). So, salience can protrude some compositional elements in image more important and some less important. It is not objectively measurable, but results from complex interaction between many factors, such as size, color contrasts, tonal contrasts, sharpness of focus, perspective, placement in the visual field, overlap, etc. Table 11 summarized the salience element in PCs.

According to their size, sharpness of focus, tonal contrast, color contrast, placement in the visual field, and perspective, dragon or panda in PC is created the visual weight, hence the salience, arousing the image viewer to draw more attention to it. The disparity in size between the represented participants in the whole cartoon shows the unequal relationship between them. All the focus is on

**Table 9. Distribution of information value in PCs.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>PC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top-Bottom</td>
<td>PC1, PC3, PC4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center-Margin</td>
<td>PC6, PC8, PC9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-Right</td>
<td>PC2, PC5, PC7, PC10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10. Position of information value in PCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Information Value in PC (IVPC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top-Bottom</td>
<td>IVPC1: dragon has the generalized substance. It is real that the dragon could damage the relationship. The little black man was threatened by the dragon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IVPC3: dragon has the generalized substance. It is real that the dragon could bring danger to Uncle Sam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IVPC4: dragon has the generalized substance. It is real that dragon’s behavior of emitting carbon dioxide and other waste gases is concrete or true.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center-Margin</td>
<td>IVPC6: the nucleus of information is that the dragon’s modernization was based on missile heads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IVPC8: the nucleus of information is that the dragon did the cyber theft, who was condemned by other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IVPC9: the nucleus of information is that the panda was grasping the man tightly and the man had the experience before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-Right</td>
<td>IVPC2: the dragon is at the right with the nucleus of the information, who was strong and domineering not to let others in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IVPC5: the new information is that tenants were being threatened by the panda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IVPC7: the new information is that the dragon is the one who would destroy the relationship with Uncle Sam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IVPC10: the new information is that the angry dragon was spitting fire and burning the books on democracy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Salience element in PCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PC</th>
<th>Salience Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC1</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC2</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC3</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC4</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC5</td>
<td>Panda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC6</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC7</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC8</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC9</td>
<td>Panda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC10</td>
<td>Dragon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

dragon or panda. Composition is not just a matter of formal aesthetics and of feeling; what it does in this way is to follow the requirements of mode-specific structures and produce specific meaning.

3) Framing

The absence of framing emphasizes group identity, such as in PC4, PC7, and
its presence suggests individuality and differentiation, such as in PC1, PC2, PC3, PC5, PC6, PC8, PC9, PC10. Visual framing is a matter of degree: elements of the composition may be strongly or weakly framed.

There are many ways to achieve framing, such as by actual framing lines in PC3, by space between elements in PC1, PC2, PC4, PC5, PC6, PC8, PC9, PC10.

4.5. Images of China Construed in PCs in Terms of Metaphorical Analysis

The working mechanism of metaphor is the process by which mental models of these metaphorically structures are produced have been theorized as a mapping from a source domain (hereafter SD) to a target domain (hereafter TD) (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

In PC1, the dragon occupies most of the cartoon in the composition, reflecting the conceptual metaphor (hereafter CM) of “large size is strong” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), while the little man was shown as a black shadow, occupying only the lower right corner of the cartoon, reflecting the conceptual metaphor of “small size is weak” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The disparity in size between the two represented participants in the whole cartoon showed the unequal relationship between them. The dragon was angry because of the smoke cloud above its head. Bush, as the American President, represented the United States, and he was so frightened that he pointed to the dragon and said, “This could damage our relationship.” The dragon was looking down on Bush, while Bush was looking up at the dragon, showing the disparity of power. In PC1, there are two metonymies. One is the dragon referring to the national identity of China, the other is Bush, the American President representing the national identity of the United States. PC1 has two multimodal metaphors (hereafter MM). In MM1, SD appears as the dragon, which refers to national identity by metonymy mechanism, corresponding to the “CHINA” in the text and constructing the TD China together. To describe a MM, it can be taken the basic formula: A IS B, in CM paradigm. Hence, MM1 is “China is the angry dragon”. In MM2, SD appears as the little man with the word “BUSH”, which represents the national identity of the United States, corresponding to the “BUSH” in the text and construing the TD the United States together. Hence, MM2 is “The United States is the timid Bush”. MM1 and MM2 are the negative metaphors, because both the details of the image and the sentiment expressed in the text are negative. It is noted that the cognitive basis of metaphor is based on the metonymy. The dragon is used to refer to China, which has finished the metonymic function. There is a docking interaction between the national identity of China highlighted by metonymy and the “national characteristics, behaviors, and attributes” mapped by metaphor. Dragon is presented as a mixture of metonymy and metaphor. While metonymy refers to national identity of China, dragon itself acts as independent metaphor SD, activating the interaction between metonymy and metaphor and constructing meaning. The working mechanism of MM is a mapping process from SD to
TD (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The characteristics, behaviors, and attributes of SD1 can map to the TD1 and construct the national image of China’s dangerous hegemony in the virtual metaphor scene. However, in PC1, the central metaphor is “China is a dragon”, but the image of dragon (SD) is the dragon in foreign culture, not the dragon in Chinese culture. The metaphor and other metaphorical phenomenon in PC1 cannot be explained by the traditional physical view, but can only be explained by the cultural connotation of the SD. Some metaphors may be based not on physical experience, but on purely cultural considerations and cognitive processes (Talebinejad & Dastjerdi, 2005). In addition to the textual context of the content of the newspaper that published the PC, the metaphors in PC are also related to recent events in the news. Knowledge of current events and relevant news information are the key to understanding metaphor. When the image producer created this PC, some foreign powers were concerned about China’s rapid economic development, promoting the “China Threat Theory” and being hostile to China. The communicative meaning of PC1 is China’s power would ignore the presence of foreign powers and pose a threat to them.

In PC2, dragon occupies the middle part of the entire cartoon, the largest and most prominent volume, and is the information center of the cartoon. The wall behind the dragon represents the Great Wall. The dragon opened the small door and let the man in but blocked the Statue of Liberty to come in and its facial expression was extremely fearful. The man with the briefcase dissatisfiedly shouted, “HEY! SHE’S WITH ME!” The attitude conveyed by the cartoon is critical, showing the negative impression of foreigners on China and China’s economic form. In PC2, foreign style democracy and freedom, obstacles, the image of China, and Chinese economic reform are all TDs, expressing abstract concepts, which are respectively represented by concrete SDs such as the Statue of Liberty, the Great Wall, the dragon, and the man carrying a briefcase respectively. So, there are two MMs and two VMs in PC2. VM1 is “the foreign style democracy and freedom is the Statue of Liberty, and VM2 is “the obstacles are the Great Wall”. MM1 is “China is a dragon”, and MM2 is “Economic reform is the man carrying the briefcase”. In addition, in PC2, there exists two CMs, “closing the door is rejection or exclusion” and “opening the door is welcome or acceptance”, which are respectively presented as the dragon blocking out the Goddess of Liberty, representing foreign style democracy and freedom, and the dragon inviting men to come in. This PC2 was created in 2005, and some foreign powers were concerned about China’s rapid economic development, advocating the “China Threat Theory” and were full of hostility toward China. In addition, China has long been the target of criticism by the United States in its annual “Human Rights Survey Report”. Given this social context of this era, it is easy to infer that the communicative intention of PC2 is to criticize China for allowing economic reform while refusing to introduce foreign style democracy and freedom.
In PC3, dragon occupies the top of the entire cartoon, which is the larger and
the more salient participant in PC. Compared with the dragon, Uncle Sam is the
smaller participant. There are two CMs of “large size is strong” and “small size is
weak” in the cartoon. The disparity in size between dragon and Uncle Sam de-
monstrates the unequal relationship between them. The title for the PC3 is “USA
& CHINA TALK MONEY”. In the cartoon, there is a sign struck in the center of
the reservoir that reads “$1.33 TRILLION RESERVES.” The gate of the reservoir
is marked “DANGER”, which is a metonymy of the gate of the reservoir
representing the danger. Here exists a MM of “the danger is gate of the reser-
voir”. Uncle Sam in the left corner representing the United States spoke to the
dragon on the dam of the reservoir representing China. Here exists two MMs,
one is “China is a dragon”, the other is “the United States is Uncle Sam”. The
behaviors of dragon mapped to the national identity of China and constructed
hegemony in the virtual metaphorical scene, which was a threat to American
economy. According to the dialogue between them, it is the United States who
was forced to bring warning of trade sanctions because of China’s behavior, but
China was not afraid of the United States and ignored the United States’ warn-
ing. If the United States launched trade sanctions against China, China would
release massive foreign reserves at any time which would bring danger to the
United States economy. It hinted that China ignored the existence of foreign
powers in the economy and posed a threat to them.

In PC4, there are two metonymies in PC4, which are the dragon representing
national identity of China, and sheep representing foreign countries of poor na-
tions. PC4 has two MMs. One is “China is the dragon in the sheep’s clothing”,
the other is “foreign countries are sheep”. The dragon in the sheep’s clothing re-
fects the main characteristics of China is to win everything stealthily, who is de-
termined, cunning, ruthless, using a variety of manipulative tactics not only to
get what he wants, but also to avoid being seen as he really is by others. Dragon
is presented as metonymy and metaphor. While metonymy refers to national
identity of China, it acts as an independent metaphorical SD, activating meta-
onymy and metaphor interaction within the same body to construct meaning. It is
the dragon of SD that mapped its behaviors, attributes to China of TD. PC4 in-
dicates that foreign media wanted to highlight foreign countries, as poor nations,
to pay attention to environmental protection, and point the finger of blame at
China’s behavior of stealing carbon dioxide and other waste gases, so that for-
eign viewers believe China’s so-called despicable behavior. Thus, the image view-
ers have a clearer understanding of the evil nature of China.

In PC5, panda occupies the right part of the cartoon, which the most salient
part. Compared with the panda, three scared tenants behind the door just occu-
py the corner with the tiny figure, indicating the weak side. Hence, based on CM
of SIZE IS POWER (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), PC5 has two CMs of “large size is
strong” and “small size is weak”. In PC5, the panda represents the national iden-
tity of China by metonymic mechanism and corresponds to verbal “CHINA” to
construct the TD China together. The three tenants embody national identity of the United States, corresponding to “US DEBT TALKS” to create TD the United States together. Hence, PC5 has two MMs. One is “China is panda with a ferocious and fierce look”, the other is “the United States is the scared tenants”. The image of Panda as the “LANDLORD” is a means to obtain benefits by squeezing the tenants. The panda as SD maps its characteristics, behaviors, and actions shown in cartoon to China as TD. It shows that, in addition to the image of the dragon in the foreign tradition, the image of the panda is also constructed. The relationship between the landlord (China) and the tenants (the United States) is that the latter is in a vulnerable position, while the former has the right to speak. Therefore, PC5 reveals that the United States is a vulnerable group with given and recognized information, indicating that the United States is threatened by China.

In PC6, dragon occupies the center of the cartoon and is the salient one, whereas the flashlight with the character “PENTAGON” just takes the margin of the right top. It indicates the asymmetrical relationship between them. There exists two CMs in PC6 of “large size is strong” and “small size is weak”. On the body of the dragon, there is a national flag of China and the text “China” at the bottom of the cartoon to fix China’s modernization, which activates the dragon to represent the national identity of China through metonymic mechanism. Hence, in the process of construing the metaphor, the identity reference function of the SD is often used first. In PC6, one of the MMs is “China is the dragon with the missile heads”. In this MM, two SDs appeared, one is the dragon, the other is the national flag. With the help of SD’s attached objects and its structural relations with other components, the synergistic interaction between metonymy and metaphor is generated. These SDs themselves only use metonymic national identity of China, and their highly symbolic characteristics with the help of missile heads attached to them activate metaphorical mapping, which maps the characteristics of entity (threat, danger) into the TD of China to construct the Chinese characteristics (threat, danger). The national identity highlighted by metonymy and the national characteristics of metaphorical mapping produce docking interaction. The missile heads in the body of dragon are ironic to China’s peaceful development. It indicates that China’s modernization is based on nuclear weapons, which is a serious threat to the world. Another MM in PC6 is “the United States is the PENTAGON”.

In PC7, comparatively, the dragon almost shares the same size with Uncle Sam, which signifies the equal relationship between them. There are one MM in PC7, which is “China is a dragon”, and one VM, which is “the United States is Uncle Sam”. Apparently, the United States has the symmetrical relationship with China. However, the dragon stepping his foot on Uncle Sam’s tuxedo secretly is sarcastic with the utterance by Uncle Sam. According to the working mechanism of metaphor, SD’s behavior, and its resulted characteristics map to TD of China. Hence, the result of the mapping process indicates that China is a mean and hy-
pocritical country, which is a big threat to the United States.

In PC8, dragon occupies a major part of the cartoon, which is the salient participant. Compared with dragon, a group of people standing on dragon’s tail appears in the small size. There are two CMs of “large size is strong” and “small size is weak”. The disparity in size displays the unequal relationship with each other. Besides the two CMs, there are two metaphors in PC8 which are based on two metonymies respectively, that is the dragon refers to national identity of China corresponding to the text “CHINA”, and a group of people refers to the foreign countries. China was accused of cyber theft by the foreign countries, which was a threat to the cyber safety in the foreign countries. The image of thief is mapped from SD of dragon to TD of China.

In PC9, panda, as the salient participant, accounts for the whole cartoon. Whereas Justin Trudeau, who is grasped in the hand of panda, only occupies a little space in the cartoon and is the minimized participant. There exists two CMs of “large size is strong” and “small size is weak”. Imbalanced relationship displays clearly in the size of the two participants. As the metonymy of President or Prime Minister representing a country, Justin Trudeau now is the Prime Minister of Canada, representing the country Canada. Hence, two metonymies are created in PC9, which are panda representing the national identity of China, and Justin Trudeau embodying the national identity of Canada. Based on metonymies, two metaphors are created, which are MM “China is a Panda”, VM “Canada is Justin Trudeau”. The action or behavior of grasping tightly in the palm of one’s hand is a kind of control. Controlling others is a king of might, forcing suppression through violent might. It indicates panda’s despicable character and wrong values. Justin Trudeau is in the palm of Panda, reflecting Panda’s strong desire for control and absolute domination towards Justin Trudeau. The working mechanism of metaphor is a mapping process from SD to TD. Hence, the characteristics, behaviors, and attributes of SD Panda mapped to TD China to construct the national image of China in the virtual metaphor scene.

In PC10, dragon represents the national identity of China. Based on metonymy, it creates a MM of “China is the angry dragon”. Another metonymy is “the book embodies democracy in Hong Kong”. The cartoon depicts an angry dragon spitting flames to burn the book with the text “HONG KONG LIBRARY BOOKS ON DEMOCRACY”, which indicates the attack on the political and social system, centralized politics, stifled democracy, and fettered freedom of speech. The behaviors and actions of dragon as SD map to TD of China and construct the national image of China’s stifled democracy, and hampered freedom of speech.

The characteristics, behaviors, actions, and attributes of SDs, foreign dragons and pandas mapped to the TD (China), creating new similarities. It subverted the positive images of the Chinese dragon, demonized China, reconstructed the national identity of China, and formed the negative meaning towards China. Table 12 offers the construed images of China from MAPCs.
Table 12. Construed images of China from MAPCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PCs</th>
<th>Images of China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC1</td>
<td>Being strong, hostile, dangerous, hegemonic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC2</td>
<td>Being hegemonic; refusing the democracy and freedom to come in with the economic reform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC3</td>
<td>Being strong, hegemonic; danger and a big threat to the United States in economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC4</td>
<td>Being evil, cunning, hypocritical, despicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC5</td>
<td>Being strong, ferocious, fierce; a big threat to the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC6</td>
<td>Being strong; a serious threat to the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC7</td>
<td>Being mean, hypocritical; a big threat to the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC8</td>
<td>Being strong; thief; a big threat to the cyber safety in the foreign countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC9</td>
<td>Dominating, controlling to Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC10</td>
<td>Stifling democracy; hampering freedom of speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The structure and representation patterns of these SDs showed coherence and systematic characteristic, generally highlighting negative attributes such as strong, greedy, evil, ferocious, violent, hypocritical, domineering, hegemonic, and thievish, which were highly consistent with traditional stereotypes, and reflected the image producers’ prejudice against the emerging China under the influence of foreign hegemonic fixed thinking. It was created and promoted a comprehensive image of China as economically, politically, militarily threatening, domineering, hypocritical, bully, and greedy to the world. Hence, the “China Threat Theory” was set up to cater to the ideological purpose of the West.

4.6. Cultural Connotation and Communicative Intention Conveyed Through PCs by Foreign Media

4.6.1. Cultural Connotation

Based on metonymy mechanism, panda in PCs created a metaphor “China is ‘Panda’”. Whereas the image producers did not take the image of Chinese panda to represent the panda in PCs of foreign media but apply the different images panda as the choice of SD. Foreign media depicted the panda having the ferocious, cunning, fierce, domineering, and hypocritical characteristics. They are not the images of lovely, cute, friendly, charmingly naïve Chinese panda. The cultural connotation of Chinese panda is one of peace, harmony, and friendship. Chinese pandas are so beloved around the world for their cute and cuddly appearance, and they have represented as a symbol of Chinese culture and diplomacy. However, the pandas represented in these PCs of foreign media are quite different from and contradictory to the cultural connotation of panda.

Dragon was represented as the dragon of foreign culture, not the dragon in Chinese culture. Hence, it is not the Chinese dragon, but the foreign dragon. There are great differences between the “dragon” in Chinese traditional culture and the “dragon” in foreign culture, and the cultural connotations and meanings...
of the two are greatly different. In foreign mythology and legend, dragon is often seen as malevolent creature that embodies chaos and destruction. It resembles a giant lizard with wings and scales on its body, trailing a long snake tail and able to breathe fire from its mouth, a “monster” (see the images in PCs). In the Middle Ages, “dragon” was a symbol of evil, and Satan, the evil devil who fought against God in the Bible, was called “The Great Dragon”. Therefore, in Christian art, “dragon” always represents evil. In Chinese culture, dragon has the takeoff, vibration, vigorous, pioneering meaning, and it is used for positive meaning.

Overall, the cultural connotations in PCs by foreign media are meant to create a specific impression of China, and to convey a particular political message to the viewers.

4.6.2. Communicative Intentions

The communicative intentions involved in these PCs included the following:

1) To inform. PCs are to inform the image viewers about the important news or events happened in the world, such as in diplomacy, economy, national relationship, environment, cyber safety. From the generic features, the cartoon producers used dragon and panda as the symbol of Chinese culture to condense reality through eye-catching, original, and humorous ways to guide the cognitive thinking direction of the viewers. The reconstruction of “reality” by images is a typical penetration of ideology (Forceville, 2006). In the Representational Meaning, visual structures did not simply reproduce the structures of “reality”. On the contrary, the images of “reality” created were closely related with the interests of the social institutions, that is ideological (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Hence, they informed the viewers that the information provided was the “reality”. Whereas the image producers of PCs distorted the facts to suit the needs of the West and appealed the image viewers to take some actions to solve the problems from the “reality”. In the Interactive Meaning, the horizontal oblique angle was used in most of the PCs to detach the salient participants from the viewers. The vertical low angle from low to high was employed to make China have a superior position compared with other countries, such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The use of high modality in PCs enhanced the credibility of images, protruding the “reality”. In the Compositional Meaning, information values demonstrated that the other countries were threatened by China by many fields, such as in democracy, diplomacy, economy, environment, modernization, cyber safety. The dragon and panda representing the national identity of China as the salient elements, showed the disparity in size between the represented participants, which indicated the unequal relationship between them. The presence of framing indicated the individuality and differentiation between China and the other countries. In the Metaphor parsing of PCs, like language, semiotic modes such as images have the function of reproduction and reconstruction of social and psychological reality (Zhu, 2007). Metaphors are original, creating new similarities by choosing unexpected SD and unconventional visual arrangements, providing a new perspective on something,
and thus constructing or reconstructing social identity. The cartoon producers mapped the negative features, characteristics, behaviors, actions and attributes from SD dragons and pandas onto the TD China, creating a new similarity that provided a new perspective for the West to understand China, constructing a new identity that subverts the images of Chinese culture while vilifying the images of China in the West.

Through the above functional and cognitive analysis of these 10 PCs, it is to inform the viewers the “reality” of China, constructing the negative images of China, conveying the communicative intention of “China Threat Theory”.

2) To persuade. PCs aim to persuade the image viewers to adopt a particular stance or perspective to side with one political party. Through the metaphorical level, the metaphorical meaning transferred the significant semantic features of the metaphor “China is a dragon” and “China is a panda” to the ontology China. The image producers used satire, unconventional visual representations to create new similarities and provided new perspective on the events mentioned in PCs, constructing, or reconstructing social identity, hence, to persuade the viewers to adopt a certain point of view. Hence, the persuasiveness of PCs let the viewers agree with the “reality” construed in these 10 PCs and sided with the inferior political party.

3) To criticize. Based on the analysis of these 10 PCs in visual grammar and metaphor, PCs criticized China’s actions, behaviors, characteristic. The image producers used satirical humor to criticize Chinese events or political policies.

In conclusion, the communicative intentions were to shape and promote China’s political, economic, military threats, hegemony in all aspects, and portray the images of China as economically, politically, and militarily threatening, domineering, hypocritical, bullying, and greedy, which was cater to the foreign ideological purpose of “China Threat Theory”.

4.7. Framework Proposed to Analyze PCs

Figure 1 is a functional-cognitive analytic framework for PCs proposed by the researcher from the multimodal discourse analysis. There are four stages involved in the analysis. Stage 1 Cultural level is to find out the generic features of PC, so that the viewers will have a comprehensive understanding of its unique discourse form, discourse style, discourse convention, and discourse ideograph. Stage 2 Functional level is to analyze PC from visual grammar, which focuses on the representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning realized. Stage 3 Cognitive level is to analyze the metaphor in PC, which involves three steps, metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation, and metaphor explanation. Stage 4 Integrated level is to find out the images of the reported country comprehensively.

5. Conclusion

The research conducted a multimodal discourse analysis of a corpus of 10 PCs
with animals about China published in foreign media. It revealed that the communicative intention in PCs about China of foreign media was to shape and promote China’s political, economic, military threats, hegemony in all aspects, and the images of China were finally portrayed as economically, politically, and militarily threatening, domineering, hypocritical, bullying, cunning and greedy, which was cater to the foreign ideological purpose of “China Threat Theory”.

The Chinese call themselves “heirs of the dragon”, and the dragon is a totem of faith in the minds of the Chinese people, with its auspicious clouds and vibrant energy representing dignity and good fortune. In the PCs of the foreign mainstream media, the images of “Chinese dragons” are not unfamiliar either, but they often go off the rails and become symbols of the devil, images that express the deep concern and complex mentality about the new rising China in foreign countries. The dragon’s large body and brutal nature are often used to suggest China’s growing power and threat to other countries. This is also true for the depiction of panda in PCs of Western media.

Due to obvious political and ideological differences and consideration of their
own national interests, foreign media news value standards tend to portray China in a negative light. Foreign media have been setting a fixed framework for China news according to political and ideological needs, repeating and reinforcing the established framework in terms of topics, angles, keywords, etc., and misinterpretations have been continuously consolidated and reinforced by the media. Under the worry of “China Threat Theory” about China, the foreign media express their over-categorized understanding of China through the means of PCs, and through specific imagery and discourse. They organize their understanding of China into what is shown in PCs, so that, over time, a wide range of viewers worldwide will build up an understanding of China in their minds. Such memories and reactions are biased. Multimodal discourse analysis from a dual perspective validated the above findings.

Multimodal discourse analysis of PCs from the perspective of visual grammar and metaphorical mechanism is a functional and cognitive study. The former is analyzed from the functional level, focusing on the social aspect of discourse analysis; the latter is analyzed from the cognitive level, focusing on the cognitive aspect of metaphorical mechanism. Through the analysis of PCs by visual grammar, the knowledge of the construction of cartoons can be found out, while through the analysis of metaphorical mechanism, the reason of the typical foreign way of cognition can be unveiled. This functional-cognitive approach would reveal the power relations and ideologies hidden in the phenomena that are not easily discovered by viewers. Therefore, the integrative analysis from visual grammar and metaphorical mechanism can more comprehensively explore PCs.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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