

Multimodal Communication in Advertising: Analysing the Captions for the Olympics 2008

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This paper aims to explore the dialogic relations between form and function in multimodal discourse by looking into six print advertisements for the Olympics 2008 released by Mainland China. Data for analysis are chosen on the grounds that, first, the wordings in Mandarin Chinese are simple, slogan-type, but creatively interweaving the Games' logo with attractive pictures through which the messages could be plenty. Secondly, they encourage the (imaginative/creative) audience to integrate the semiotic elements (slogans and visual images) to trigger contextual effects, namely pun, irony, metaphor and humour, and will perform various pragmatic functions thereafter. Thirdly, they are ideologically significant for conveying and promoting traditional Chinese culture, inviting and persuading the audience to recognize the prominent values in a friendly style.

Different readers will receive different readings and search for their optimal relevance (Sperber & Wilson 1995) in the interpretation process, during which a wide array of implicatures would be inferred and derived from non-/verbal communication together with the contexts, depending on different degrees of involvement and shared cognitive environment. Lending itself as a symbolic arena for embracing competing ideologies, multimodal discourse displays the gist of, and adds interest to interpretability, reflecting the speaker-audience's interaction and dynamism, and thus keeping the dialectical relationship between sociocultural structures and social practice/discourse (Fairclough 1995).

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Presentation title:

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