A Visual Grammar Analysis of Lesaffre's Website

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ABSTRACT

The traditional discourse analysis focuses on the language analysis, but ignores the effect of non-language sources to the textual construction. At present, however, with the development of technology, pure discourses gradually decrease. There are other elements existing in the discourse more or less. The discourse analysis blending various communication semiotics is called multimodal discourse analysis. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001:2) hold that multimodality is one of the features of modern society. Multimodal Discourse Analysis is paid much attention in recent discourse analysis. The Visual Grammar founded by Kress and van Leeuwen can help to analyze the multimodal discourse. This text, based on the Visual Grammar to analyze the Lesaffre's website, will find the charming of the combination of language and pictures, and finally give some points in designing our own websites. Through the study of Lesaffre's website, when building the website of the company, first the arrangement of information should be paid much attention to. Except some essential conventional information, such as the introduction of the company, other new information, such as the latest news of the company, should be put in obvious place. Then website gives people intuitionistic feeling, so the collocation of the company's information in the website should be reasonable.

INTRODUCTION

The so-called corporate website is a platform for enterprise network construction and image publicity on the Internet. As an enterprise, the most obvious effect of establishing its own website is to show the world its own business style and make more people understand it, so that it can have a certain increase in public visibility. Through the Internet, the enterprise can have more and more information communication and service exchange with other industries or individual customers. All in all, for an enterprise, setting up its own website is not only to find permanent enterprise advertising publishing platform, but also has other benefits. So building an excellent website is essential to the development of the enterprise.

There are many studies doing research on national website or entertainment website. Research on real enterprise especially those having close relationship to people's life hardly have been studied. So the writer chooses a company called Lesaffre, which focus on yeast and its byproducts production, to study so as to find some learning points that can be applied in Chinese websites construction. This text takes Visual Grammar as the theoretical framework, making an analysis from the three aspects of Visual Grammar, namely representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning to find out the strong points of Lesaffre's website so as to learn some tips to build our own websites.
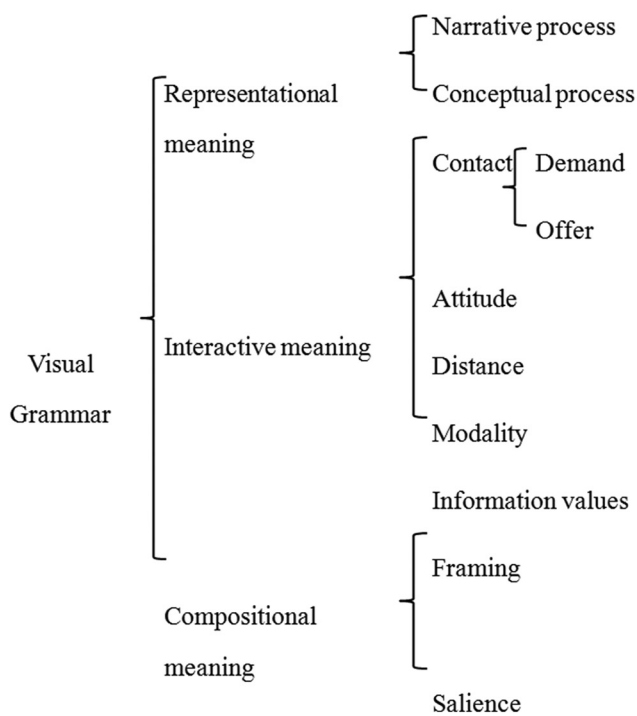
DATA COLLECTION

In this text, the qualitative analysis method is applied to analyze the website. The analyzed material is taken from *http://www.lesaffre.com/*, the home page of Lesaffre. As a global key player in yeasts and fermentation, Lesaffre designs, manufactures and markets innovative solutions for Baking, Food taste & pleasure, Health Care and Biotechnology. It originated in France. This text is trying to solve two problems: 1) What are the relationships of these multimodal symbols? 2) What the effects do these multimodal symbols have to the development of the company? The analysis of the website through Visual Grammar has not only the theoretical significance but also the practical significance. As for the theoretical significance, first and foremost, this is a combination of theory and practice as it uses Visual Grammar to analyze Lesaffre's website. Then the interdisciplinary study of combining linguistics and business is another breakthrough in research on the basis of the traditional studies. As for the practical significance, it is known to us all that Chinese enterprises have more opportunities to go out under the "One Belt One Road" policy. In this process, a good website plays an important role in making the enterprises known by the world. When we have a better understanding of the excellent foreign website, we can save a lot of time, energy and financial resources. From this aspect,

the practical significance lies in the model significance of our own websites' design.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, the writer adopts the Visual Grammar to analyze the multimodality of Lesaffre's website. The following is the introduction of Visual Grammar.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) put forwards the first systematic and comprehensive framework for multimodal discourse analysis in the book *Reading Images: Visual Grammar*. Visual Grammar considered that language is a social semiotic form. The combination of language and other semiotic forms in a discourse makes the discourse meaningful and colorful to the readers. To analyze the discourse with various semiotic forms, we have Visual Grammar. Here is a table that exhibits the framework of Visual Grammar.

Visual Grammar
- Representational meaning
  - Narrative process
  - Conceptual process
- Interactive meaning
  - Contact
    - Demand
    - Offer
  - Attitude
  - Distance
  - Modality
- Compositional meaning
  - Information values
  - Framing
  - Salience

Representational meaning refers to the faithful reproduction of the objective world of people, human activities, places, and even the inner world of people. It consists of two processes: narrative process and conceptual process. Narrative process concludes action process, reaction process, verbal and mental process, while the conceptual process contains relational process and existential process.

Interactive meaning, to make it simple, is description of the relationship of image marker, image representation and readers. The elements, including in the interactive meaning, are contact, attitude, distance and modality. Modality in Visual Grammar is grouped into three kinds: high modality, middle modality and low modality which can be demonstrated by color, illumination, etc.

Compositional meaning means the whole layout of multimodal discourse. The elements composed the compositional meaning are information value, framing and salience. Information value is the placement of particular information

such as new and old information. Framing means whether there are some devices to connect the elements of discourse or not. Salience refers to different degrees of elements for readers such as background and foreground.

MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON LESAFFRE'S WEBSITE

The website of a company involves the information of name, location, operation philosophy, scope of business and so on. It makes the readers have a clear and sound understanding of the development history of the company. On Lesaffre's website, there are not only characters but also colorful pictures. Multimodality is applied in the design of the website. What are the relationships of these multimodal symbols? What the effects do they have to the long-term development of the company? These are the questions that the paper is trying to solve. Here, in order to make the viewers have a better understanding of the foreign website, the paper will analyze the Lesaffre's website from the three aspects of Visual Grammar—representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning.

Analysis from Representational Meaning

As we declare before, representational meaning mainly explores the representation of the objects represented in the real world. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 79) propose that representational meaning can be realized by two processes: narrative process and conceptual process. The vector is a criterion to identify whether it is the narrative process or conceptual process. A vector refers to the elements that form a diagonal. "Vectors are the marks of narrative process." (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 82)

In the website, there is no vector in concept image, and the website belongs to the concept image. Narrative image is to show the development of actions, events, and the process of change. These elements do not exist in the website. So here we only analyze the website from the conceptual process to understand the process of classification, the process of analysis and the process of symbol.
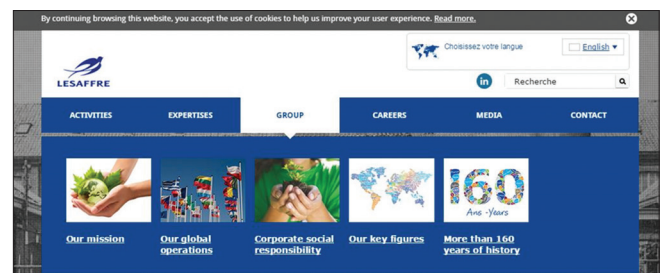
Picture 1

When we first click the home page, this is what we will first look. Here we can clearly see the different parts of the company. For example, in the group part, it introduces its mission, global operations, corporate social responsibility, key figures and long history. By this way, the readers can quickly have an understanding of the company. These categories allow the viewers have a purposeful reading and

save time. There are also other classifications on the page, such as the scope of business:

Picture 2

In Lesaffre's home page, more information can be found when we click the topic words. For example, in the picture 2, if the viewers want to receive more information about the Baking, they can click the word "Discover". In this way, the home page is not in a mess.

Picture 3

Lesaffre's obvious image figure is swallow which is in picture 3. The reason that the company chooses the swallow as the mark brand is that swallow represents the profound meaning of life. The founder of Lesaffre hoped that the company can be like migratory birds, not only having spring vitality, but also learning the characteristics of swallow. Swallow is not afraid of obstacles and it will return to its birthplace every year. These characteristics symbols that Lesaffre will make every effort to meet customers and maintain loyalty to customers.

Analysis from Interactive Meaning

Interactive meaning is associated with the social relations between actors and the evaluative orientations that participants adopt towards each other and to the represented world (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996: 110). This meaning can be realized from four aspects: contact, attitude, distance and modality. Here we only discuss the modality.

Modality refers to the validity and credibility of statement that we make out to the world to which we pay attention. It includes high level modality, medium level modality and low level modality. The elements, such as color, contextualization, representation, depth and brightness, can help to realize the modality meaning. On the website, we can find the colors of blue, brown, green and so on, and some pictures are colorless. What is the meaning of these colors?

In picture 4, the picture is colorless. It is a historical picture of Lesaffre's building. Without colorful color, it gives people a feeling that Lesaffre has a long history which can make the customers trust them so that they can build lasting partnership.

Picture 4

In picture 5, the bottom color is green. Green represents nature, environmental protection, peace, life and hope. On the one hand, it is consistent with the topic of Health care. On the other hand, it is consistent with its mission that they work to improve the quality of their food, so as to preserve the health of living beings in the long term and run their business with respect for our planet.

Picture 5

From the analysis of two colors appearing on the website, it can be found that the choice of color is important in designing the website. So it provides a hint in designing the website that the designer of a website should choose the appropriate color to fit to the topic.

Analysis from Compositional Meaning

Compositional meaning is achieved by the layout of image which consists of information value, framing and salience. In a company's website, the information value is realized by the placement of company's information. The arrangement of the website is from the top to the bottom and the information presented in turn is six important information of the company (activities, expertises, group, careers, media and contact), company logo (Working together to better nourish and protect the planet), four main scope of business (Baking, Food taste & pleasure, Health care and Biotechnologies), a video about Lesaffre and some news about Lesaffre. This arrangement is quite common in designing a website. However, there is a weakness. From the home page, it is difficult for the viewers to find the new information. Every time the home page is opened, what is seen is still the same. In the information explosive age, people's eager to the new information is urgent. If the website fails to show the latest information to the viewers, people will lose interest to look at the website. So this is a point that the company can improve.

DISCUSSION

In recent years, the state policy has paid much attention to the strategy of going out. "Going out" is a kind of transnational integration mode, which is dominated by Chinese companies

and serves the strategy of Chinese companies, from which we can gain more benefits. At present, we can optimize the industrial structure from the perspective of opening up market space. It is an inevitable trend to obtain economic resources, strive for technology sources, or break through the barriers of trade protection, and cultivate China's international competitiveness of large multinational corporations. "Going out" is an inevitable choice. It is also an important symbol of China's opening to the outside world to a new level. When foreign-funded enterprises entered China on a large scale to share in the Chinese market, the Chinese economy must consider new space for development. At the same time, when foreign-funded enterprises came in, China's powerful enterprises "went out." When the international multinational corporations come in China, they combine their own strengths with China's advantages to broaden Chinese market. Chinese powerful enterprises should also take advantage of the opportunities when transnational corporations adjust their industrial structure so that Chines companies can enter the international market. Actively participating in international cooperation and competition can help company gain market share and technological development ability.

First impressions are important when one is not known to others. When a company is not known to others, company's website is the window for people to know the company. An excellent website is a wonderful advertisement. Since English is not the mother tongue of the Chinese, it is difficult for Chinese companies to build a website that meets the reading habits of the English speaking countries and makes the company become advanced and international. Learning from others' experience makes us take fewer detours. In this passage, we analyzed Lesaffre's website, which can give us some hints in setting up our own website.

The first one is the arrangement of information. People tend to look for the main information. What is the main information for the readers? What is the new information for the readers? These factors will decide the frequency that whether the readers would like to browse your website regularly for the latest information. In the results part, the writer said that in Lesaffre's website, it is difficult for the readers to grasp the new information easily. That will make the readers think that your company does not have new development. The second one is about the selection of color. The use of color on the website gives the initial impression on people. As a food-related company, the choice of color should be more environmentally friendly. All in all, as for a company's website, the description of the text should be combined with the use of pictures and colors so as to show the cultural connotation of their own enterprises as much as possible.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the multimodal analysis on the Lesaffre's website is done under the framework of Visual Grammar with some meaning being explained in detail by the use of several pictures. After the analysis, the following findings can be drawn: (1) For representational meaning, the writer mainly analyzes the conceptual image and finds that the arrangement of the information, the further analysis of the information and symbol of swallow make the viewers have a better understanding of Lesaffre Company; (2) For interactive meaning, the color plays an vital role in comprehending the company's operation philosophy. Therefore the choice of color in designing website deserves the designers' attention. (3) For compositional meaning, the paper only discusses the information value. As regard to Lesaffre Company's website, it does not achieve much in the aspect of information value for the reason that the home page does not provide new information to the viewers. This is what website designers in China should pay attention to.

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