
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Semiotic Construction of Website Images of Chinese and American Memorials from the Perspective of Visual Grammar

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| ABSTRACT

This study conducts a contrastive analysis of multimodal discourses on the official websites of the Memorial of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the United States Capitol from the perspective of visual grammar. It examines the construction of meaning in images, texts, and their combinations. In terms of visual grammar, aspects like interactive meaning, compositional meaning, including informational value, salience, and framing, and the role of symbolic signs are analyzed. The findings reveal both disparities and similarities in how the two memorials use multimodal elements to convey historical and cultural connotations. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural multimodal discourse in memorial spaces and provides practical implications for memorial website exhibition design, cultural communication, and cross-cultural understanding.

| KEYWORDS

visual grammar; multimodal discourse; cultural communication

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1. Introduction

As key carriers of historical memory and cultural communication, historical memorials preserve a nation's collective memory and revolutionary journey while serving as important venues for public understanding, research, and inheritance of history. In this information age, the culture communication means of contemporary memorials have undergone profound transformations. With the rapid development of the Internet and multimedia technologies, memorials are no longer confined to the traditional on-site exhibition and explanation models. The multimodal presentation of their official websites has a profound impact on the public. Through the official websites of memorials, online virtual exhibitions have become the norm. With the help of 3D modeling, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) technologies, visitors can experience the atmosphere of the collections and exhibitions in the memorials as if they were there, transcending temporal and spatial constraints. By means of modern presentation techniques, memorials enhance the interactivity and educational function of exhibitions, making the revolutionary history more vivid and easier to understand.

At present, certain achievements have been made in the research on memorials both at home and abroad. Domestic scholars have conducted research on memorials from the perspectives of culture communication and educational functions. For example, based on the teaching theory of "flipped classroom", Fan Ai hong, Xia Zi he, and Yin Ling (2022:197-216) proposed the "flipped museum" model, and explored how this model integrates museum

education into classroom teaching to promote the deep integration and mutual benefit between university museums and classroom teaching. Jiang Zheng qing and Wang Xia (2021:379-387), centered around the tourist experience, studied specific strategies for enhancing the digital display effect of former residence memorial halls to address the dilemma of their lagging digital display development.

Foreign scholars' research on memorial halls focuses on the factors influencing the visitor flow of memorial halls. For instance, from a macro - perspective, Martin Ejnar Hansen (2018:296-305) analyzed the impact of socioeconomic factors on the number of museum visitors, and found that various socioeconomic factors such as the inflation rate, average income, and educational level have a significant impact on the number of museum visitors. Vicky Woollard (2018:251-269) analyzed the reasons influencing the number of museum visitors through external and internal factors. In addition, some scholars have also studied the internal and external layout of memorials from the perspective of cultural communication. SueAnne Ware (2008), through the study of the collections in memorials, analyzed the connection between the memories carried by memorials and the landscapes presented in them.

Existing studies have laid a solid foundation for understanding memorial discourse, but few have systematically compared the multimodal meaning construction of political memorials across different cultural contexts, especially between China and the United States. However, there is still a lack of systematic comparative analysis of the multimodal discourses of Chinese and foreign memorials from the perspective of visual grammar. Memorials in different countries and cultural backgrounds show significant differences in the application of multimodal discourses. These differences are not only reflected in forms and styles but also, more importantly, reflect great differences in cultural, historical, and social backgrounds.

As an important theoretical tool for analyzing the generation and communication of meanings in visual images, visual grammar provides a unique perspective for interpreting the multimodal discourses of memorials. It regards images as a linguistic system with grammatical rules. By analyzing the layout of elements, symbolic signs, spatial relationships, etc. in the images, it reveals the hidden meanings and intentions behind them. Within this theoretical framework, this study explores how memorials in China and internationally use the combination and arrangement of different modalities to shape unique cultural images and convey specific historical narratives and values.

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the multimodal discourses of domestic and international representative memorials by applying the theory of visual grammar. By selecting typical cases, namely the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial and the official website of U.S. Capitol and conducting in-depth analyses from multiple dimensions such as representational meaning interactive meaning and compositional meaning, it reveals the characteristics and rules of the application of multimodal discourses in memorials under different cultural backgrounds, explores the cultural causes and communication effects behind them, provides theoretical support and practical guidance for the design, exhibition, and cultural communication of memorials, and contributes to cross-cultural communication and understanding.

2. Theoretical Framework of Visual Grammar

2.1 Visual Grammar and Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Developed by Kress and van Leeuwen based on Halliday's systemic functional grammar, visual grammar treats images as semiotic systems with structured rules for meaning-making. Visual grammar describes and grasps the regular significance of the way image elements are combined, that is, the meaning of composition. It should be emphasized that interpreting and explaining images should also be regarded as a semiotic production process, and follow the same logic as language. Therefore, the three major meanings in Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar are also extended from the three meta-functions of ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions in Halliday's functional grammar, namely representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning.

Visual grammar aims to provide a practical description of the main compositional structures that have become conventions in the historical process of Western visual semiotics, and to analyze how they function in the process of meaning generation in contemporary image production and image interpretation. Visual grammar holds that the status of visual communication in a specific society can only be understood in two contexts: one is the range of various forms or modes of communication available in that society, and the other is the way in which these forms of communication are used and evaluated in terms of value.

2.2 The Three Functions of Visual Grammar

The theory of visual grammar regards representation as a process in which the producers of signs are trying to represent a certain object or entity. Based on Halliday's functional grammar theory, the theory of visual grammar proposes three major meanings, namely representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning.

The representational meaning in the theory of visual grammar refers to the way in which an image presents the real world or the imagined world, reflecting people's cognition and understanding of the world, mainly including narrative representation and conceptual representation. The narrative representation mainly includes three processes, namely the action process, the reaction process, and the verbal/mental process. The action process refers to the way in which an image shows a dynamic process through the actions of characters and the development of events. The reaction process refers to the construction of a relationship through the direction of a character's gaze. Dialogue and thought bubbles are typical visual resources in narrative processes, used to represent the verbal and mental actions of participants. Conceptual representation, which construes participants in terms of their identities, qualities, and relations, encompasses three structures: classificational structure, analytical structure, and symbolic structure. The classification structure shows things according to categories, indicating their belonging categories and category relationships. The analysis process presents the components of things and their relationships, or the connection between things and their characteristics. The symbolic process uses image elements to symbolize specific meanings.

The interactive meaning in the theory of visual grammar is related to the interpersonal function of functional linguistics, and mainly explores the relationship of interaction among the image producer, the viewer, and various modalities in the image, which is realized through elements such as contact, social distance, perspective, and modality. Among them, contact refers to the meaning relationship established through eye contact between the participants in the image and the viewer. According to whether there is eye contact between the participants in the image and the viewer, images are divided into demand-type and offer-type. Social distance is determined by the frame size of the camera shot, which determines the social relationship between the participants in the image and the viewer, and different social distances are reflected through the size of the shot. Perspective refers to the attitude of the image producer towards the participants and the viewer, as well as the power relationship between the participants and the viewer, which is reflected through the shooting perspective. Common perspectives include the eye-level perspective, the bird's-eye perspective, and the worm's-eye perspective.

The compositional meaning in the theory of visual grammar mainly focuses on the spatial layout and organizational mode of the elements in the image, and how this layout conveys specific information and meaning, mainly including three aspects: information value, salience, and framing. Information value is shaped by element positioning, with distinct locations conveying various semantic meanings. Vertically, upper elements convey ideals, authority and core meanings, while lower ones represent reality, foundations and secondary content. Horizontally, left elements signify given information, and right elements denote new, emphasized content. Centred elements serve as visual focus delivering core meanings, whereas peripheral elements offer supplementary context. Salience is achieved via size, color contrast, clarity and foreground-background differentiation to highlight key elements. Framing, through lines, empty space and elements distance, demarcates visual zones, defining relevant or separate relation among elements. Framed elements imply independence, while unframed ones suggest interconnectedness and unity.

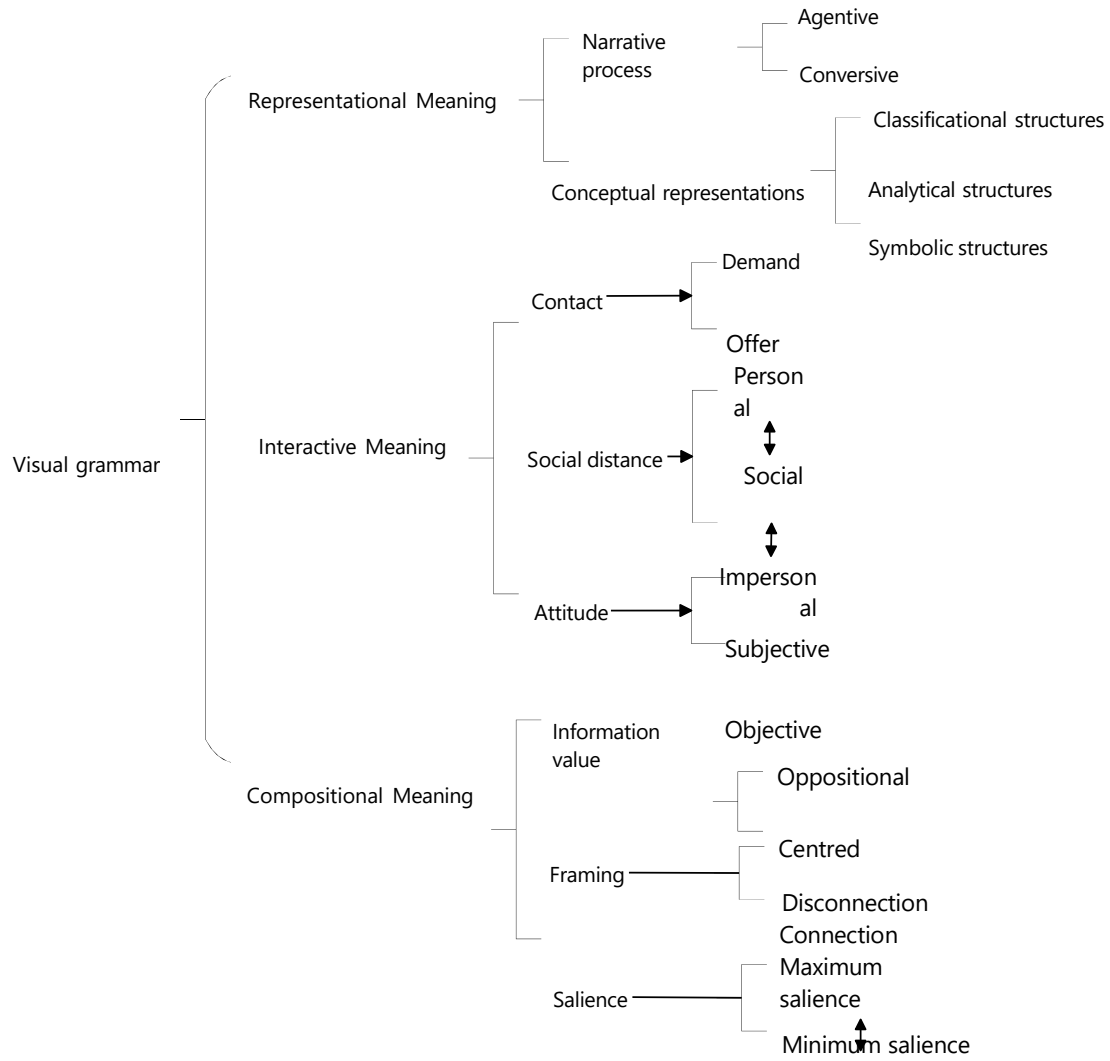


Figure 2-1 The system of visual grammar

3. Research Data

In order to deeply analyze the characteristics and rules of the application of multimodal discourse in memorials under different cultural backgrounds, this study collected image data. The research focuses on the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial and the official website of U.S. Capitol. 14 pictures were respectively extracted from these two official websites, and finally a sample database containing 28 pictures was constructed. All images were collected between May 1 and May 10, 2026, from the official websites of the two memorials.

In the selection of the sampling method for figures, this study adopted a non-random sampling method, based on the clear purpose of comparative analysis of this study. In view of this, the extraction of figures is not random but is carried out after careful consideration, through the strategy of making analogies between the similar parts with relevant function of the two official websites. Specifically, the extracted pictures are widely sourced and targeted, mainly covering the background pictures on the homepage of the official website, which often carry the core images and style tones that the official website attempts to convey; the navigation bar on the homepage of the official website, as a key area guiding users to browse, contains rich information about the website architecture and key information directions; the introduction pages of the online exhibitions on the official website, which centrally display the important exhibition contents and relevant information presented by the website; and the introduction pages of the collection resources on the official website, which are of great significance for understanding the resource characteristics and values of the physical institutions associated with the website. Through analysis of these figures, it is expected to uncover valuable research conclusions.

4. Comparative Analysis of the Multimodal Discourse on the Official Websites

4.1 Representational Meaning

Visual grammar divides the visual representation structure into narrative structure and conceptual structure. The hallmark of the narrative structure is the existence of a vector which realizes a real dynamic process.

4.1.1 Narrative Representation

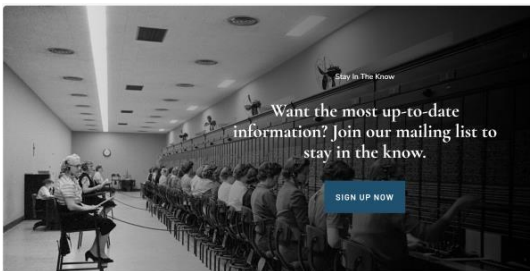


Figure 4-1

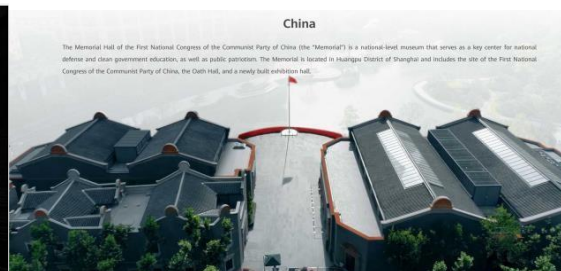


Figure 4-2

Figure 4-1 and figure 4-2 are the background images at the bottom of the homepages of the official website of the U.S. Capitol and the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial. From the perspective of Multimodal Discourse Analysis, the background image at the bottom of the U.S. Capitol's official homepage instantiates a structured narrative action process. As detailed in Figure 4-1, the visual narrative reconstructs an archival scene of an early telecommunication switchboard, capturing staff wearing headphones operate communication devices to process and transmit information. Syntactically, the row of operators on the left functions as the actor. The telephone lines they handle form a clear vector directed toward the goal: the staff on the right. Sourced from a historical information-processing site, this image works in conjunction with the accompanying text to encourage visitors to subscribe to an email list for updates. By evoking a vintage office setting, it constructs an impression of professionalism and credibility, enhancing the institution's authoritative and trustworthy identity.

In sharp contrast, Figure 4-2 does not adopt a narrative representation structure at all, but instantiates a suggestive symbolic process within conceptual representation. There is no dynamic action or directional gaze to form a valid Vector (the defining feature of narrative representation). Instead, the red flag at the geometric center of the memorial building functions as the Carrier in symbolic structure, symbolizing the revolutionary leadership and spiritual core of the CPC. The symmetrical layout of the building and the vertical extension of the flagpole reinforce the sense of solemnity and authority, guiding viewers' attention to the introductory text above through compositional Saliency. This static symbolic arrangement constructs the

memorial as a sacred site of collective revolutionary memory.

By comparing Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-2, we can find that the two memorials adopt fundamentally different representational strategies for their homepage backgrounds: the U.S. Capitol uses a dynamic narrative action process to convey institutional professionalism and credibility, while the 1st CPCNC Memorial uses a static symbolic process to convey historical sanctity and authority.



Figure 4-3



Figure 4-4

The left picture, showing a shell was fired towards a ship, is the introduction page of the permanent exhibition collections on the official website of the U.S. Capitol, and the right picture, showing two visitors are staring the painting on the wall, is the on-site exhibition image on the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial.

Figure 4-3 is mainly composed of three parts: a torpedo, a cannon that fires the torpedo, and a submarine above the picture. It instantiates a transactional action process. In this visual narrative, the cannon serves as the actor, the fired torpedo functions as the vector, and the German submarine constitutes the goal. The torpedo's trajectory forms a clear directional vector, constructing a dynamic combat sequence. Combined with the textual appeals "Buy a Liberty Bond," the visual narrative establishes a causal chain: public investment, military empowerment, national defense. This multimodal integration constructs a unified civil-military ethos, framing collective wartime participation as a civic duty.

By contrast, Figure 4-4 realizes a reaction process. In this configuration, the two visitors act as reactors, and the historical painting on the wall functions as the phenomenon. The visitors' gaze forms a perceptual vector directed toward the artwork, creating a reflective observational relationship. This narrative emphasizes historical contemplation and intergenerational learning, positioning viewers as active recipients of revolutionary heritage. The visual arrangement underscores the memorial's educational mission, facilitating the transmission of historical memory through direct visitor engagement.

By comparing Figure 4-3 and Figure 4-4, we can find that the official website of the U.S. Capitol shows the spirit of unity between the military and the civilians during historical wars, while the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial emphasizes that viewers can draw on and learn from historical events by displaying visitors observing historical images.

4.1.2 Conceptual Representation

Different from narrative representation that depicts dynamic actions, conceptual representation constructs stable, abstract and symbolic meanings through classification, analysis and symbolic processes, mainly reflected in color symbolism, geometric shapes and cultural symbolic elements in the two websites.



Figure 4-5



Figure 4-6

Figure 4-5 is the theme exhibition page of the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial. Figure 4-6 is the visitor guide on the homepage of the official website of the U.S. Capitol. From Figure 4-5 and Figure 4-6, we can find that both the official website of 1st CPCNC and the official website of the U.S. Capitol use rectangles or squares frequently. Rectangles and squares symbolize practicality and order, representing technology, and are the source of strength and progress. The extensive use of rectangles and squares on both official websites reflects the integration of information dissemination means of the memorial and technology in this information age. At the same time, it also implies that 1st CPCNC and the U.S. Capitol respectively hold pivotal positions in the political arenas of China and the United States.

4.1.2.1 The classification structure

Within the framework of conceptual representation in Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic visual grammar, the classificational structure constitutes a core ideographic system that realizes conceptual categorization through visual organization, essentially constructing a hierarchical relationship between the superordinate category and its subordinate members.



Figure 4-7



Figure 4-8

Figure 4-7 is the introduction page of the collection resources on the official website of 1st CPCNC. Figure 4-8 is the introduction page of the permanent exhibition collections on the official website of the U.S. Capitol. By comparing Figure 4-7 and Figure 4-8, we can find that on the collection introduction page, the official website of U.S. Capitol chooses to adopt the implicit classification method. In Figure 4-8, the images of the three collections are placed at equidistant positions from each other, are of the same size, and maintain the same orientation with respect to the horizontal and vertical axes. They are presented in a relatively objective and context - detached way. The background is simple and neutral, the depth is reduced or eliminated, and the perspective is frontal and objective. In contrast, 1st CPCNC adopts an explicit classification method that includes a superordinate participant (COLLECTION) as the title. This enables visitors to better identify the categories to which the four elements provided in the picture belong.

Figure 4-7 uses "COLLECTION" as the explicit superordinate category, presenting four revolutionary artifacts as parallel members of the same class. Figure 4-8 implicitly groups news articles, photographs, and cartoons under the umbrella category of American historical documents, creating subcategories based on media type. Both images, via the encoding logic of classificational structure, integrate scattered visual elements into a unified conceptual framework, reinforcing the hierarchical association of "category-member" rather than the "whole-part" dependency emphasized by analytical structure, thus achieving systematic categorization and ordered presentation of historical narratives.

4.1.2.2 The analytical structure

The analytical structure refers to emphasizing the components of things in an image and their interrelationships, or the relationship between a bearer and its characteristics. The basic feature of a temporal analytical structure is the existence of a timeline: participants (sometimes the entire structure or scene) are arranged on an actual or imagined line, usually horizontal, and sometimes vertical.



Figure 4-9

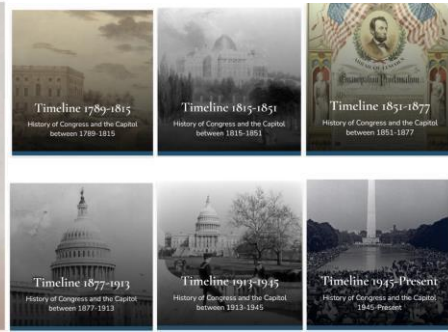


Figure 4-10

Figure 4-9 is an internal image of the theme exhibition on the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial. The theme of Figure 4-9 is to review the development process of 1st CPCNC Memorial over the past hundred years. In Figure 4-9, relevant historical images are chronologically arranged along a horizontal timeline that runs from right to left. The text explanations beside the pictures help visitors better understand the development history of the memorial.

Figure 4-10 is the historical timeline at the bottom of the exhibition page on the official website of the U.S. Capitol. In Figure 4-10, each segment representing a time interval can be regarded as a component of the overall historical display. Through corresponding images (such as buildings, documents, crowds, etc.) and textual descriptions, it presents events related to the United States Congress and the Capitol building, as well as architectural changes during that period. For instance, in the segment from 1913 to 1945, the images of buildings and figures imply the scenes of congressional activities and relevant historical events during this stage.

By comparing Figure 4-9 and Figure 4-10, we can find that the historical timeline of official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial adopts red as the basic color tone, while the U.S. Capitol uses black and white as the background color. 1st CPCNC Memorial conveys the theme of revolution through red, and the U.S. Capitol creates a retro and objective atmosphere with the black and white background. Both pictures display relevant historical images in conjunction with the timelines. From the perspective of the analytical structure, the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial presents a complete and clear timeline, demonstrating the development context of 1st CPCNC Memorial. In contrast, the official website of the U.S. Capitol does not have a clear timeline. Instead, it divides historical time periods according to different themes, and visually, it is not as closely coherent as the timeline of 1st CPCNC Memorial. Instead, it places more emphasis on the distinctive features of each historical period.

4.1.2.3 The symbolic structure

In the theory of visual grammar, the symbolic structure focuses on how symbols in an image construct meaning, which can mainly be divided into two types, namely symbolic attributes and symbolic suggestive. Symbolic attributes involve two participants — the participant whose meaning or identity is established within the relationship (the Carrier) and the participant that embodies that meaning or identity and bestows it upon the Carrier (the symbolic attribute). Symbolic suggestive has only one participant, that is, the Carrier.



Figure 4-11



Figure 4-12

Figure 4-11 is the introduction interface of featured courses on the homepage of the official website of the U.S. Capitol. The bald eagle in Figure 4-11 is the national bird of the United States and an important iconic sign of the country. With its unique appearance (white head, brown body, yellow beak and claws), the bald eagle has become one of the iconic representatives of the national image of the United States. The dome building of the United States Capitol in the background of Figure 4-11 is a

symbolic sign of the political power and democratic system of the United States. It represents the location of the legislative body of the U.S. government and symbolizes important concepts such as the political decision-making and democratic process of the United States, carrying the connotations of American political culture.

The star elements in Figure 4-11 symbolize the states of the United States. Like those on the American flag, the stars here associate with the concept of the union of many states under the federal system of the United States and symbolize the national composition structure of the United States. The dynamic postures of the two eagles, as symbolic attributes, have a causal relationship with the spirit of freedom, strength, etc. advocated by the United States. The posture of the eagles soaring freely and full of a sense of power can make the visitors associate with the concept of the spirit of freedom and the powerful national strength advocated by the United States.

Figure 4-12 is the exhibition introduction page of the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial. The symbol of the sickle and hammer in Figure 4-12 is a symbolic sign of communism and the Communist Party. The sickle represents the peasant class, and the hammer represents the working class. The combination of the two symbolizes the alliance between the working class and the peasant class, representing the proletarian revolution and the socialist cause. In China, it is an important symbol of the Communist Party of China, symbolizing the nature and mission of the Party, reflecting the Party's unity and leadership over the working people of workers and peasants, as well as the determination to strive for the realization of the communist ideal. The dominant color of Figure 4-12 is gold, which symbolizes extremely high value. Through a suggestive symbolic process, it endows the hammer and sickle symbol, representing the alliance of workers and peasants and the proletariat, with a supreme status.

By comparing the above two symbols that appear on the official websites of the two memorial halls, we can find that the official website of the U.S. Capitol emphasizes the political status of Congress, the unity and integrity of the country, and the pursuit of the spirit of freedom by using symbolic attributes. While the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial places more emphasis on the unity of the people, the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat, and the pursuit of the communist ideal by using suggestive symbolic method.

4.2 Interactive Meaning

The interactive meaning in visual grammar refers to the interaction between the creator of an image and the viewer. An image involves two types of participants, namely the depicted participants (the people, places, and things presented in the image) and the interactive participants (the people who communicate with each other through the image, that is, the creator of the image and the viewer).

4.2.1 Offer and Demand

There is a fundamental difference in whether the depicted participants in the image look towards the visitors. When the depicted participants look at the viewers, the vector formed by the participants' line of sight will connect the participants with the viewers. Even if this connection exists only at the imaginative level, it can be regarded as the establishment of contact. The gaze towards the visitors has two related functions. Firstly, it creates a direct form of visual communication. It explicitly addresses the viewers and calls them with a visual "you". Secondly, it constitutes an image act. The creator uses the image to exert an influence on the viewers.



Capitol Conversations

Figure 4-13



Figure 4-14

Figure 4-13 is the navigation page of the homepage of the official website of the U.S. Capitol; Figure 4-14 is the page of the cultural relics in the collection of the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial. In Figure 4-13, the two depicted participants do not directly look at the visitors. Instead, the connection between the participants and the visitors is established through the gesture of the man on the left that points directly towards the visitors. The man on the left in Figure 4-13 points at the visitors with one finger, as if visually expressing "Hey, you, I'm talking about you", inviting the visitors to come closer, aiming to encourage the visitors to participate in the activities of the congressional dialogue. In Figure 4-14, there is only one participant. The depicted participant directly looks at the viewer, and the vector formed by the participant's line of sight connects the participant with the viewer. The depicted participant in the picture does not smile but gazes at the viewers with solemnity, making the visitors feel awed.

In Figure 4-13, the two participants look at each other rather than the viewer, forming an offer contact. It presents the conversational interaction between the two figures as objective information to the audience, positioning viewers as onlookers in the narrative, weakening direct interpersonal engagement and reinforcing the documentary nature of the scene. By contrast, in Figure 4-14, the historical figure gazes directly at the viewer, creating a demand contact. Through direct eye contact, the figure actively solicits viewers' attention and emotional resonance, bridging temporal and spatial divides to construct a solemn and reverent emotional bond. Via differentiated gaze coding, the former achieves an objective representation of real-world communicative scenarios, while the latter realizes the subjective conveyance of the historical figure's spiritual temperament, thereby generating semiotic divergence between observational objective narration and immersive emotional narration.

4.2.2 Social Distance

Within the interactive meaning framework of Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar, social distance constructs hierarchical social relationships between viewers and represented participants through shot size. It is categorized into four types from close to far: intimate distance, personal distance, social distance, and public distance, each corresponding to distinct power relations, emotional connections, and interaction modes.

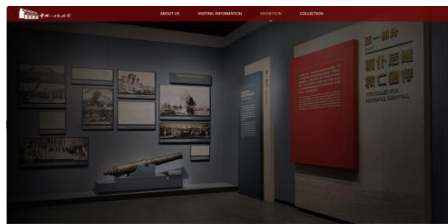


Figure 4-15



Figure 4-16

Figure 4-15 is the exhibition page of the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial. Figure 4-15 shows the internal exhibition

scene of the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Figure 4-15 adopts a focused public distance. It presents a single historical narrative unit in its entirety through panoramic framing, including the historical photo wall, the core cultural relic cannon, and the thematic display board, maintaining a uniform rational distance between viewers and all exhibition elements. This encoding constructs a solemn and authoritative social relationship, positioning the memorial as a public historical space bearing collective revolutionary memory. It guides viewers to receive systematic historical education as historical onlookers, reinforcing the sense of identity with collective memory and the solemnity of historical narratives.

Figure 4-16 is the exhibition page of the official website of the United States Capitol. Figure 4-16 shows the scene of an exhibition hall in the United States Capitol, which falls within the range of medium shot to full shot. Figure 4-16 employs an open extended public distance. It presents a large open space and diversified exhibition contents through ultra-wide panoramic framing, including independent display cases, interactive touch screens, and the Capitol model, implying the accessibility and explorability of the space. This encoding constructs an open and equal social relationship, positioning the exhibition hall as a democratic cultural space open to the public. It endows viewers with the identity of independent explorers, encouraging personalized visiting experiences and reflecting the emphasis on individual experience and diverse expression.

The difference between the two essentially reflects the distinct manifestations of collectivist historical memory and individualist cultural values in the semiotic construction of memorial spaces: the former strengthens the authority of collective narratives through unified public distance, while the latter highlights viewers' autonomy and participation through open public distance.

4.2.3 Attitude

Within the interactive meaning framework of Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar, attitude encodes the image producer's attitude toward represented participants and constructs power relations between viewers and participants through shooting angles. Vertical perspectives are categorized into worm's-eye view (participants hold higher power than viewers), eye-level view (equal power relations), and bird's-eye view (viewers hold higher power than participants), each conveying distinct emotional attitudes and value judgments.

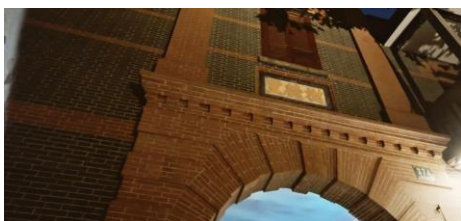


Figure 4-17



Figure 4-18

Figure 4-17 is the background image at the bottom of the homepage of the official website of the Memorial Hall of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Figure 4-17 shows the architectural scene of 1st CPCNC Memorial. Figure 4-17 adopts a low-angle worm's-eye view. Shot from ground level upward, the converging lines of the arch and brick walls make the building appear towering and majestic. This encoding constructs an unequal power relation between viewers and the building, endowing the revolutionary sacred site with authority superior to viewers. It conveys emotions of reverence and solemnity, sanctifying the building as a material carrier of collective revolutionary memory and reinforcing the authority of historical narratives.

Figure 4-18 is the homepage of the introduction section of Congress on the official website of the U.S. Capitol, showing the building of U.S. Capitol. Figure 4-18 adopts a frontal eye-level view. Shot at a height level with the building's base, it fully presents the symmetrical overall structure with balanced composition and no obvious bias.

perspective distortion. This encoding constructs an equal power relation between viewers and the building, conveying an attitude of openness, democracy, and accessibility. It positions the Capitol as a public political space open to all citizens, reflecting the American cultural emphasis on equality and reinforcing its public attribute as a symbol of democratic institutions.

The difference between the two essentially reflects the distinct manifestations of collectivist historical outlook and individualist democratic outlook in visual semiotic construction: the former strengthens the authority of collective narratives through the sanctification of architecture, while the latter highlights the public nature of democratic institutions through equal visual relations.

By comparing Figure 4-17 and Figure 4-18, we can see that both 1st CPCNC Memorial and U.S. Capitol present a solemn and majestic image to visitors. However, the means by which they create the solemn atmosphere are different. The 1st CPCNC Memorial adopts a looking up perspective, while the U.S. Capitol uses an eye-level perspective. The looking up perspective of 1st CPCNC Memorial reflects the great significance and solemnity of the birth of the CPC, symbolizing the glorious start of the Chinese people's arduous struggle and the pursuit of national rejuvenation under the leadership of the Communist Party. This is closely related to China's collectivist political culture, which emphasizes the leading role of the CPC in preserving national historical memory and promoting national rejuvenation. And the eye-level perspective of the U.S. Capitol conveys the spirit of equality emphasized in the United States Declaration of Independence.

4.3 Compositional Meaning

The compositional meaning in the theory of visual grammar refers to the conveyance of specific information and meaning through the layout, arrangement, and interrelationships of the elements in an image. It mainly includes the following three aspects: informational value; salience and framing.

4.3.1 Informational Value



Figure 4-19



Figure 4-20

Figure 4-19 is the introduction page of the collection resources on the official website of 1st CPCNC Memorial. The alarm whistle is located at the upper part, serving as the core carrier of both visual elements and meanings. The text below provides background information, specifying its users (the workers of the Shanghai Post Bureau who participated in the second and third armed uprisings). Consistent with the vertical information value principle in compositional meaning, elements placed in the upper part of the frame carry ideal and authoritative meanings, while the lower part leans towards explanation and illustration, supplementing and endowing the item with historical significance.

Figure 4-20 is the introduction of the internal collection on the exhibition page of the official website of the U.S. Capitol. Figure 4-20 is arranged horizontally, with the text on the left side providing detailed information about the book. It includes the book title "Tertiary History of the Grand Canyon District with Atlas", the author Clarence E. Dutton, the publication year 1882, as well as the background introduction about the establishment of the United States Geological Survey and related reports. This belongs to rational information and is the given part of knowledge

transmission. The image on the right side shows the scenery of the Grand Canyon, which is an intuitive presentation of the scenes related to the book's theme and is more emotionally appealing. From the perspective of visual grammar, the text on the left side carries explanatory information, and the image on the right side plays a key role, serving to assist in strengthening the impression of the theme.

Figure 4-19 adopts a center-focused information value distribution. Placing the physical artifact at the absolute center of the frame and the descriptive text in a subordinate peripheral position, it maximizes the core semantic status of the relic itself. Figure 4-20, the scientific document interface, employs a left-right split information value distribution, with the left-side text serving as background explanatory information and the right-side illustration acting as the core narrative carrier, forming a dual semantic division of "text-image, background-subject". The two images respectively reflect two encoding logics of information value: "single-core focus" and "dual-area juxtaposition", with the former emphasizing evidence-based narrative centered on the entity and the latter constructing the information hierarchy of scientific literature through text-image coordination.

4.3.2 Framing

From the framing dimension of compositional meaning in Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar, framing constructs relationships of integration or separation between elements through visual cues such as lines, boundaries, and color transitions, and is divided into two core modes: weak framing, emphasizing integration and unity and strong framing emphasizing segmentation and independence.

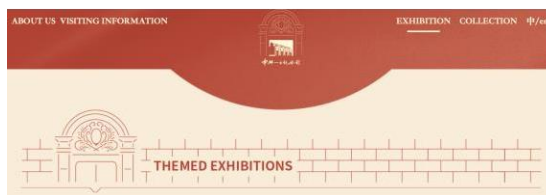


Figure 4-21



Previous Exhibits

Figure 4-22

Figure 4-21 employs a weak framing integration model. The top red navigation area and the lower beige content area are naturally connected by a soft curved line without rigid straight boundaries; the architectural line drawing on the left seamlessly extends with the brick wall texture, and the title "THEMED EXHIBITIONS" is embedded in the brick wall lines without additional border segmentation; the memorial's brand logo in the top center and the navigation text belong to the same red visual area, forming an organic whole. This encoding weakens the sense of separation between different information units, integrates navigation functions, brand image and exhibition theme into a unified narrative unit, conveys the coherence and integrity of revolutionary historical narratives, and strengthens the unified identity of the memorial as a carrier of collective historical memory.

Figure 4-22 adopts a multi-layered strong framing segmentation model. The banner as a whole has a clear outer boundary, and the red ribbon-shaped label and blue explanatory text bar in the upper right corner form independent information boxes; the left text area and the right character main visual area form a clear functional division through color contrast and content differences; the title, subtitle, main visual image and explanatory text all have independent visual boundaries, and the elements do not overlap with each other. This encoding divides information into clear independent units through multiple boundaries, constructs a rigorous information hierarchy, highlights the focal status of core promotional elements (the main visual character and the special exhibition label), strengthens the dramatic tension and visual impact of the promotional content, and guides the audience to read information in a preset order.

The framing difference between the two essentially reflects the narrative logic in different cultural contexts: the former realizes an "integrated historical narrative" through weak framing, emphasizing the continuity and unity of collective memory; the latter realizes a "segmented promotional narrative" through strong framing, highlighting the hierarchy of information and the attractiveness of individual elements.

4.3.3 Saliency

From the salience dimension of compositional meaning in Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar, salience refers to the visual prominence of elements achieved through contrastive cues such as size, color contrast, light-dark difference, and figure-ground relationship, which assigns differentiated visual weights to elements, establishes a hierarchy of importance, and guides viewers' attention distribution and interpretation paths.



Figure 4-23



Figure 4-24

Figure 4-23 employs a multi-layered light-dark contrast salience model. The cartoon area uses a pure black background, forming a strong light-dark contrast with the surrounding white newspaper layout, making the cartoon body the absolute visual focus of the entire frame and completely separating it from other textual information in the newspaper. The star-spangled pattern of the American flag, presented in slanted dynamic lines, has the highest contrast against the pure black background. Its visual weight even exceeds that of the astronaut group, highlighting the national identity and national narrative behind the lunar landing event; the white spacesuits of the astronauts form a secondary contrast with the black background, serving as secondary visual elements to support the core narrative. However, the text in the image is fragmented by line frames, resulting in low visual salience of textual information and preventing viewers from accessing comprehensive related information.

Figure 4-24 employs a color layered contrast salience model. The orange-red flag body forms a strong color contrast with the pure white background, making the flag occupy all visual attention and completely weakening irrelevant background information. The collection annotation text in the upper right corner uses light red, which has a high degree of integration with the flag background and extremely low visual weight. It deliberately weakens institutional information and focuses viewers' attention entirely on the relic itself.

The salience difference between the two essentially reflects the different narrative orientations of Chinese and American memorials: the U.S. Capitol website emphasizes the emotional resonance and communicative power of historical narratives by highlighting the drama of events and national symbols; the 1st CPCNC Memorial emphasizes the seriousness of historical evidence and the inheritance of collective memory by highlighting the symbolic value of the relic itself.

5. Conclusion

This study, taking visual grammar as its theoretical framework, has carried out a systematic comparative analysis of the multimodal discourses of 1st CPCNC Memorial and U.S. Capitol, achieving relevant results in exploring the unique information presentation methods and meaning construction of memorials in different cultures.

Through a meticulous analysis of a large number of concrete representative cases, from multiple dimensions such as representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning, the similarities and disparities in the application of multimodal discourses between 1st CPCNC Memorial and U.S. Capitol have been clearly revealed. First, in representational meaning, the 1st CPCNC Memorial emphasizes collective revolutionary memory through classificational and symbolic structures, while the U.S. Capitol highlights individual civic participation through narrative structures. Second, in interactive meaning, the Chinese site adopts a solemn authoritative tone through demand contact and low-angle perspectives, whereas the U.S. site uses friendly offer contact and eye-level perspectives to encourage engagement. Third, in compositional meaning, the Chinese site prioritizes centralized core information through strong salience and weak framing, while the U.S. site emphasizes diversified information display through balanced layout and strong framing. Behind these disparities are the deep gap of different cultural, historical, and social backgrounds. Western culture emphasizes individual experience and diverse expressions, which are reflected in the multimodal discourses of memorials as a high degree of attention to visitors' personalized needs and rich and varied display forms. Chinese culture, however, emphasizes collective memory, historical inheritance, and the conceptions of family and country, enabling memorials to always adhere to the accurate interpretation and promotion of major historical events and national spirit during the process of information dissemination. Practically, Chinese memorial websites could appropriately increase interactive elements to enhance audience participation, while U.S. memorial websites could strengthen the coherence of core narratives to avoid information fragmentation. Despite these disparities, 1st CPCNC Memorial and U.S. Capitol also share some commons in the application of multimodal discourses, all striving to function as a public visiting place and meet the needs of the times.

This study has brought important values to the field of memorials in many aspects. At the theoretical level, it has enriched the applied research of the theory of visual grammar in cultural communication, expanded the research of multimodal discourse analysis in cross-cultural comparison, and provided new ideas for subsequent related research. In terms of practice, it has provided highly targeted optimization suggestions for memorials in China and the United States in work such as exhibition design, website construction, and exhibit display, helping to improve the display level and cultural communication capabilities of memorial halls.

However, this study also has certain limitations. Constrained by the research samples and analysis methods, the feedback from viewers is still relatively weak. Future research can select more diversified cases, use more advanced technical means to explore multimodal discourses, and deeply explore the real experiences and feedback of viewers, so as to continuously improve and deepen the understanding of the multimodal discourses of Chinese and foreign memorials, promote the development of the memorial in the new era, and better serve cultural inheritance and communication.

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