Multi-modal Discourse Analysis of Character Interaction in Drama *Pygmalion*

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Abstract: The study explores how the inner transformation is being presented in the portrayal heroine Eliza in the drama *Pygmalion*. It also mentions how the heroine Eliza interacts with other characters. Based on the multi-modal discourse analysis framework proposed by Professor Zhang Delu, some situational dialogues have been taken to analyze character images in the study. We explore that Eliza is poor, rude and illiterate in earlier stage, but she becomes polite, elegant and literate after phonetic learning. Contrary to other women in this era, Eliza had strong courage and passion for life without femininity. Different from the novel, Drama *Pygmalion* has realized the transformation from stative state to dynamic state, especially in the process of characters' interaction on the stage, which has created a vivid character to audiences. In order to understand the psychological change of character, hence, the study will show the process of Eliza's self-consciousness respectively from 4D — cultural dimension, contextual dimension, content dimension and expression dimension.

Keywords: drama, character interaction, self-consciousness, multi-modal

In 1912, Irish dramatist George Bernard Shaw's representative work *Pygmalion* was published. After its publication, it showed on Broadway in 1956. There's no doubt that *Pygmalion* had became a well-known classic and attracted much public attention. Synthesized the elements of artistic creation, multi-modal discourse can help the audiences construct the interactive meaning in drama.

1. Introduction

1.1 The basic structure of multi-modal system method

Discourse theory was put forward by linguist Zelling Harris in the 1950s.[1] During these sixty years, discourse analysis had already developed into many branches. In the early 21st century, Professor Zhang Delu (2009) put forward a multi-modal discourse analysis framework to promote the application of multi-modality in drama, advertising and other fields.[2]

Although multi-modal discourse analysis only develops about twenty years in China, scholar believes that the research of multi-modal discourse converges various fields, typically in social semiotics. According to Zhang, multi-modal discourse analysis framework is proposed from 4D — cultural dimension, contextual dimension, content dimension and expression dimension. (Figure 1)
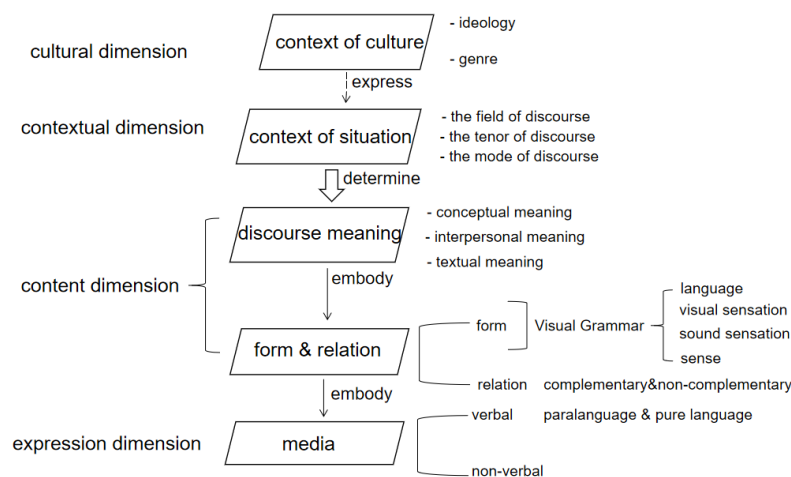

Figure 1. Multi-modal system structure (Zhang Delu, 2009)

Inside the modal structure, different dimensions constitute the part of multi-modal discourse analysis framework. The cultural dimension is to explore the reproduction of cultural context by analyzing the ideology of characters; Moreover, contextual dimension gets involved the context of situation through the field of discourse, the tenor of discourse and the mode of discourse; Besides, we can constitute the interaction from language, visual sensation, sound sensation and sense in content dimension. Taking the media as the medium, the expression dimension expresses the communicative meaning in verbal and non-verbal.4Dprovides an analysis method for multi-field research, especially for drama research.

1.2 Overview of drama *Pygmalion*

Taking the prototype of "*Pygmalion*" in Greek mythology, Bernard Shaw created an unique character image in the work.[3]*Pygmalion* presents a poor and rude image to the audiences——we called her Eliza. Contrary to Eliza, Higgins was an aristocracy with well-education. Higgins believed that Eliza would become a real lady after six-month training. After training, Eliza gradually gained the awakening of self-consciousness and won an equal position for herself. Different from the novel, drama is the form of multi-modal that can intuitively feel the transformation of Eliza's consciousness. Taking the multi-modal discourse theory as an access point, we can explore the reason why the heroine has a great change of inner consciousness before and after.

2. Theoretical analysis

A variety of scenes in drama *Pygmalion* contain multi-modal discourse, and we can reproduce the character image through some symbolic resources.

2.1 Cultural dimension

As a part of cultural dimension, context of culture is one of the cultural symbol systems. The drama *Pygmalion* reveals the social environment of Britain in the 20th century. At the opening, it began to rain. Both nobles and civilians huddled in the building to shelter. Eliza was holding a basket full of roses to sell one by one while the hero Higgins behind the pillar was secretly recording every word and action of all. Unexpectedly, Higgins can judge that Eliza was born in Lisson Grove only by her pronunciation of the "Captain"; Lateran old peeress asked for help, and Higgins pointed out that she could take a bus directly to Hampton palace. Hence, we can know it was an era that standard pronunciation could determine people's social status. This means that Eliza's mode of discourse and tenor of discourse are difficult to act like an upper aristocracy because of her underclass status.

2.2 Contextual dimension

Context of culture can express context of situation. Starting from the context research, we attempt to reveal the huge difference of social class between Higgins and Eliza by analyzing their linguistic behavior. We still take the example of the Act I in drama.

E: Eliza   H: Higgins   P: Pickering

E: (Yield to the H) Ought to be ashamed of himself unmanly, coward.

P: Is there a living in that?

H: Oh, Yes, quite a fat one.

E: Let him mind his own business and leave a poor girl...

H: Cease this detestable boohooing instantly.

E: I have a right to be here if I like, same as you.

H: Woman who utters such disgusting and depressing noises has no right to be anywhere...

H: Don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon.

E: Ow!

H: Look at her! (sing: Condemned by every syllable she utters. By right, she should be taken out and hung.)

E: Ow!

The linguistic devices to realize contextual dimension is tenor of discourse. During the talking, Higgins and Eliza are doomed to be unequal at the beginning. Though Elisa tried to talk with Higgins, Higgins did not care what Eliza really wanted to say and evaluated her with some words, such as "boohooing", "dissipating", and "depressing". Even in this "controversy", Higgins was standing with leisure posture, while Eliza shuddering in one side. In terms of emotion, Higgins was calm but dismissive, and Eliza was so emotional that couldn't argue in this talking. It shows audiences the tenor of discourse in two different classes——especially Eliza always sighs with the word "Ow". It is obvious that Eliza had not begun to awaken her self-consciousness yet.

2.3 Content dimension

Including meaning and form level, context of situation can determine discourse meaning that embodied by form and relation. In the content dimension, we will explore how the visual and auditory grammar apply with four elements——language, visual sensation, sound sensation and sense. At the beginning of the Act II, Eliza visited Higgins on her own, hoping that Higgins can help her improve the accent. So that she came here with tuition. Eliza thought that she should be given equal opportunities for dialogue.

E: Eliza   H: Higgins

E: I want to be a lady in a flower shop...But they won't take me unless I can talk more genteel.

E: I know what lessons cost as well as you do and I'm ready to pay.

H: How much?

In dialogue, we can see that Eliza was eager to change her social status. And it is also the start to awaken her self-consciousness. In the second half of the scenes, Eliza presented a sharp contrast to the audience. Eliza had been learned with Higgins for a time without any progress. Suddenly, Some servants appeared and sang: "Quit, Professor Higgins. Here our plea." As one of the elements of multi-modality, music plays an indispensable role in drama. Besides, music usually predicts a change in mood. The servants expected Higgins to give up teaching, which reflected Higgins' inner contradiction in fact. Act II finishes almost immediately, the image presents to the audiences is that Eliza, Higgins and Pickering were dancing merrily in the room. The overall mood of the drama becomes cheerful. It is the auditory interaction with visual grammar that enables one to examine Eliza's inner transformation vividly.

2.4 Expression dimension

The expression dimension contains media system. We can divide the media system into verbal and non-verbal symbols. Integrated with the Act III, the study analyzes the completion of Eliza's self-consciousness awakening. After intermezzo, Eliza made a charming impression with elegant etiquette. The last person Zoltan came on stage. Zoltan claimed that he was able to identify where people came from by accents. The interaction between Zoltan and Eliza was also extremely wonderful. We can explore their interaction from paralanguage. When Eliza talked with Zoltan, we notice the pace of her speech had a slight pause between words. Moreover, Eliza always pays attention to body language after finishing speaking. For example, Eliza lifted her dress and squatted with knees slightly so that to revere politely. These details all reflect Eliza put herself in the same position with nobles. In the end, discourse power reverses. Eliza woke up and insisted to leave after talking with Higgins, on account of the freedom and equality what she finally pursues. At last Eliza not only acquires the fully consciousness awakening, also discovers and remain focuses on who she really is.

3. Conclusion

According to multi-modal discourse analysis, the drama *Pygmalion* focuses on the interaction between characters, which can fully present the process of Eliza's self-awareness to audiences. It creates a brave, tough and independent image and redefines the role of Women. On top of that, it provides learners in different ways of appreciation: we can interpret the personal character, especially the inner transformation of the characters, from the perspective of multi-modal discourse analysis.

Reference

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