

Visual Logic and Interactive Meaning of Chinese and Western Posters: A Comparative Analysis of 84 Animated Film Posters

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Abstract

This investigation delves into the comparative analysis of audience engagement with Chinese and Western animated film posters, adopting "interactive meaning" from visual grammar theory as its analytical cornerstone. By examining 42 animated film posters from each cultural context between 2015 and 2023, the study elucidates the profound impact of "cultural differences", "aesthetic concepts", and "thematic choices" on the interactive styles of these visual artifacts. The findings reveal distinct differences in how these posters engage audiences, rooted in their cultural underpinnings. This research not only sheds light on the unique characteristics of Chinese and Western animated film posters but also offers valuable insights for their design, promotion, and appreciation, contributing to a broader understanding of intercultural visual communication.

Keywords: Chinese, Western, Visual Grammar, Animated Film Poste, Interactive Meaning

Introduction

Amidst the dynamic fusion and collision of global cultures, animated movie posters emerge as a distinctive art form, increasingly embraced and pursued by international audiences. Chinese-style animated film posters, in particular, stand as exemplary embodiments of contemporary cultural synthesis, showcasing a remarkable compatibility between oriental aesthetics and modern values. This emergent genre exemplifies the blend and innovation of traditional Chinese culture with contemporary aesthetic sensibilities through its scene design and characterisation. Despite the growing prominence of Chinese-style animated films in terms of their production and dissemination, there exists a notable dearth of systematic scholarly inquiry into their posters. This gap in research presents a fertile terrain for the detailed investigation of the interaction between these visual cultural artifacts and their global audience, thereby contributing to the expanding discourse on intercultural relations within the realm of animated cinema.

Prior investigations into film posters have predominantly employed visual grammar theory as a lens for dissecting the nuanced visual rhetoric embedded within individual posters (Feng, 2023). Through the application of this theoretical framework, scholars have delved into the visual semantics of film posters, dissecting their "representational meaning", "interactive meaning", and "compositional meaning" to unearth the deeper significances and connotations harbored within these visual texts (Callow, 2023). To enrich the interpretative depth of these analyses, researchers have amassed collections of film posters sharing thematic continuities across various epochs (Nørgaard, 2023). Such collections of animated film posters from differing historical moments serve not only to chart the evolutionary trajectory of film poster design but also to elucidate the historical progression of animated cinema itself. This longitudinal approach facilitates an examination of the ways in which multimodal messages within distinct posters interact, shaping audience interpretations and perceptions of animation.

Furthermore, certain studies have zeroed in on posters of Western Oscar-winning animated films, undertaking a holistic analysis that intricately weaves together linguistic and visual elements (Iftikhar & Shahnaz, 2019). These posters, through their adept amalgamation of diverse languages and visual strategies, adeptly encapsulate and communicate the films' central narratives. This integration not only underscores the artistic essence of the films but also accentuates the pivotal role of posters as a filmic promotional tool.

The insights derived from these preceding scholarly endeavors lay a solid groundwork for the present study, paving the way for an enriched exploration of the dynamic interplay between animated film posters and their audiences. This investigation aims to delve deeper into the interactive dimensions of this relationship, building upon the established research to offer new perspectives on the communicative potential of animated film posters within the broader context of intercultural relations.

While prior inquiries into animated film posters have contributed valuable insights, they have predominantly harnessed relatively small datasets for comparative analyses, thereby potentially compromising the reliability and representativeness of their conclusions. Notably, these studies have largely concentrated on the juxtaposition of individual film posters or those belonging to the same franchise, with a palpable dearth of comprehensive comparative analyses across diverse cultural backdrops. Addressing this lacuna, the current investigation leverages an expanded dataset to undertake a meticulous comparative analysis between Chinese animated film posters and their Western counterparts. Engaging with a corpus of 84 posters, this research delineates pronounced disparities across multiple dimensions of interaction between these two categories of animated film posters.

To bolster the precision and validity of its outcomes, this study employed Nvivo software for the systematic coding of various elements within the posters, guided by the theoretical lens of interactive meanings. A total of 336 nodes were meticulously established, laying a robust foundation for an exhaustive exploration of the interactive dynamics between the posters and their audiences. This analytical approach not only augments the accuracy of the research findings but also serves as an invaluable resource and catalyst for subsequent in-depth investigations. Through this methodological rigor, the study endeavors to unveil subtler facets

of the relationship between animated film posters and viewer engagement, thereby enriching the scholarly discourse within the domain of intercultural relations.

Research Design and Methodology

Theoretical Background

This investigation employs the theoretical underpinnings of visual grammar as articulated by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen to scrutinize the “interactive meaning” conveyed by animated film posters. This dimension of visual grammar theory serves as both a robust theoretical bedrock and an analytical scaffold for examining the modality of visual reproduction within these posters (Ezirim, 2023). Central to this study are the three pivotal aspects of ‘interactive meaning’: contact, social distance, and attitude (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020).

The “contact” dimension specifically probes the phenomenon of eye contact established between characters depicted on the posters and the viewers. When characters on a poster engage in direct eye gaze with the viewer, this is interpreted as a “solicited” interaction, crafting an immediate, albeit virtual, rapport that imbues the viewer with a sense of personal connection to the character (Zhao, 2023). Such connections, whether emotional, cognitive, or otherwise, encapsulate distinct attitudes or meanings, transmitting specific messages or feelings. For instance, a protagonist’s direct gaze can evoke a range of emotional responses in the viewer, from feeling challenged or invited to experiencing a sense of threat. This act of mutual gaze signifies an attempt by the poster’s subject to establish a communicative link with the viewer, aiming to convey a specific message or emotional stance.

Conversely, the absence of direct eye contact from characters towards the viewer is categorized as “offering” meaning (Mulya, 2020). Here, the communication is more unilateral, with the poster transmitting information to the viewer without seeking to engage in a more profound interactive dialogue. This approach permits the viewer to engage more thoroughly with the poster’s other visual and textual elements, fostering a different form of engagement that emphasizes the informational content over interpersonal connection (Roth, 2021). Through this nuanced exploration of the “contact” dimension within animated film posters, the study illuminates the intricate ways in which visual cues guide viewer perceptions and interactions, contributing to a deeper understanding of visual communication in the context of intercultural relations (Lubis, 2024).

The notion of “social distance” constitutes a pivotal element within the domain of visual grammar theory, delineating the perceived spatial separation between a character depicted on a poster and its viewer. This concept is intricately manifest through the protagonist’s placement within the poster’s visual composition and their spatial relationship to the environment, with designers tactically manipulating this distance to achieve specific communicative objectives. Social distance is stratified into five nuanced categories: public distance, Social distance, personal distance, intimate proximity, and intimate distance. These classifications derive from the character’s level of detail and their interaction with the surrounding space (Mu, 2023).

“Public Distance” usually shows the full bodies of four to five characters (Dooley, 2020). This presentation makes it difficult for the viewer to make much of an emotional connection with

the characters in the poster, allowing the viewer to focus more on the events depicted in the poster (Cohn, 2018). “Social distance” offers a broader view that includes characters and their immediate environment, aiding viewers in contextualizing the story or setting. In the realm of “Personal Distance”, characters are generally presented from the waist up, maintaining a moderated engagement with the viewer.

Conversely, a “personal proximity” invites a more intense viewer engagement by showcasing detailed views of a character’s head, shoulders, and facial expressions (Xiao, 2024). Such “personal proximity” imagery is potent in its ability to evoke a profound emotional connection, as it allows the viewer to discern subtle emotional cues and nuances (Ariwibowo, 2021). The “Intimate Distance” category, primarily focusing on the face or head through tight framing, is designed to engender a deep and personal resonance with the viewer, thereby magnifying the visual narrative’s emotional impact (Dorottya, 2020). This dynamic interplay between social distance categories and viewer engagement underscores the complexity of visual communication through posters. By fostering varying degrees of intimacy and connection, designers can subtly guide viewers’ emotional responses and deepen their identification with the poster’s conveyed message (Freistein, 2020). This exploration into social distance illuminates the multifaceted ways in which animated film posters can engage audiences, contributing to a richer understanding of intercultural visual communication and its capacity to bridge emotional and cognitive distances.

In their exploration of “attitude” within visual grammar, Kress and Leeuwen delve into the intricate relationship between the depicted figures and the viewer, as mediated through the imagery’s perspective (Satriyo, 2023). They identify three primary viewpoints: Vertical perspectives, Flat perspectives, Elevated perspectives, each offering a distinct interpretative lens and intimately linked to the attitudes and emotional tones conveyed by the figures within the poster (Serafinelli, 2022). The Flat perspectives aligns the viewer’s line of sight on the same plane as the poster’s elements, fostering an atmosphere of closeness and equality. This perspective engenders a direct and equitable connection between the viewer and the visual narrative, facilitating an emotional resonance with the poster’s theme. Such alignment invites viewers to engage with the content on a more personal and intimate level, enhancing empathy and identification with the depicted scenarios or characters.

Conversely, the “vertical perspectives” or “elevated perspectives” employs a top-down perspective that imbues the viewer with a sense of dominance or control, as if overseeing the poster’s content from a superior vantage point (Zhao, 2023). This perspective not only constructs a hierarchical visual relationship but also carries profound symbolic significance. When characters are presented from this vantage point, it often signifies power, authority, or superiority, casting the figure in a dominant light that may evoke feelings of subjugation or awe in the viewer (Mulyawan, 2021). Such a perspective manipulates the visual hierarchy to impart a sense of formidable presence or influence attributed to the character, thereby shaping the viewer’s emotional and cognitive response to the imagery.

These perspectives—each with its unique relational dynamics and symbolic underpinnings—play a crucial role in crafting the narrative and emotional landscape of the poster. Through the strategic use of viewpoint, posters can subtly manipulate viewer perception and

engagement, highlighting the sophisticated interplay between visual representation and viewer interpretation within the realm of intercultural visual communication.

Sample Collection and Classification

In the pursuit of scholarly rigor throughout this research endeavor, meticulous attention was dedicated to ensuring that the sample sources utilized were scientifically robust, representative, and encompassing. To facilitate this objective, an initial exploration and subsequent delineation of the “Chinese style” concept were undertaken to enable the precise identification and selection of pertinent animated films for analysis.

The researcher embarked on a systematic endeavor to aggregate animated films classified under the Chinese style, meticulously sourcing from the Internet on an annual basis spanning from 2015 to 2023. This process entailed the detailed compilation of information pertaining to each film, including but not limited to the year of release, thematic focus, director, and principal actors. Such thorough documentation aimed to fortify the research data’s comprehensiveness and accuracy, thereby enhancing the representation of animated film production within both Chinese and Western contexts over the specified period, and significantly bolstering the study’s foundation.

To ensure the sample’s representativeness and the reliability of the findings, stringent selection criteria were applied. Eventually, a corpus of 42 animated films embodying Chinese styles was carefully curated from the top 200 domestic animated films as shown in Fig. 1, based on the network ratings indicators for the period of 2015-2023. This selection encompassed notable titles such as *The Great Pandemonium*, *Rise of the Green Snake*, *Yang Jian*, *Big Fish & Begonia*, *Jiang Ziya*, *Lion Boy*, and *Nezha Reborn*. These films not only achieved commendable success at the box office but also garnered significant acclaim and affection from audiences.

By incorporating these emblematic works into the study, a more nuanced and comprehensive examination of the interactive divergences between Chinese-style animated film posters and their Western counterparts was facilitated. Consequently, this approach has yielded valuable insights pertinent to the design and conceptualization of animated film posters, contributing meaningfully to the discourse on intercultural visual communication and media representation.



Fig. 1. 2015-2023 Posters for Selected Animated Films in China

To elucidate the comparative similarities and distinctions between Chinese animated film posters and their Western counterparts, this study designates Western animated film posters

as reference entities. The intention behind this comparative analysis is to crystallize the differential attributes and unique qualities inherent to each cultural style. To this end, the researcher employed the authoritative film database, IMDb (Internet Movie Database), as a primary source for sample collection. Since its inception on 17 October 1990, IMDb has ascended to prominence as one of the foremost repositories of film and television program information globally. The platform offers an exhaustive array of data encompassing films, television programs, personnel (including actors and producers), and aggregates user ratings and reviews from a vast user base, thereby serving as an invaluable tool for the critical evaluation of cinematic and television productions.

This research utilises IMDb's extensive data capabilities to select 42 highly acclaimed Western animated films between 2015 and 2023, as shown in

Fig. 2. These films were not only commercial triumphs but also received laudatory assessments from both audiences and professional critics alike. Through the juxtaposition and detailed examination of these selected Western works against Chinese-style animated films from the corresponding timeframe, the study aims to more precisely delineate the variances and defining features of each cultural style's approach to audience engagement. This methodological approach facilitates a richer understanding of the intercultural dynamics at play in the domain of animated film posters, contributing to the broader discourse on cross-cultural visual communication and media studies.



Fig. 2. Posters for selected Western animated films, 2015-2023

Research Methodology

This paper delves into the exploration of gaze, distance, and attitude as depicted through characters in Chinese and Western animated film posters, with the overarching objective of unpacking the nuances of interactive meaning conveyed by these visual representations. In the pursuit of analytical objectivity and precision, this research aligns with established constructs within visual grammar theory, employing these as foundational nodes for the categorization and subsequent detailed comparative analysis of 84 selected animated film posters from both Chinese and Western origins.

In adherence to a methodologically rigorous approach, this study eschews theoretical presuppositions, opting instead for a granular, factor-by-factor examination of the posters in question, guided by a multimodal semantic analysis framework. To increase the efficiency and accuracy of this research process, NVivo 12 software, renowned for its qualitative analysis capabilities, was chosen as the tool for coding the myriad elements within the posters. This technology facilitates the systematic organization of poster elements into designated

conceptual nodes. As depicted in Fig. 3, upon completion of the coding phase, an in-depth comparative analysis of the nodes across the Chinese and Western animated film posters will be undertaken.

This methodical approach is designed to yield initial insights into the characteristic features of these posters, situated within the interactive meaning discourse. Consequently, the findings from this study are anticipated to offer valuable perspectives and recommendations for the conceptualization and design of animated film posters, thereby contributing to the broader dialogue on visual communication and intercultural engagement in the realm of animated cinema.

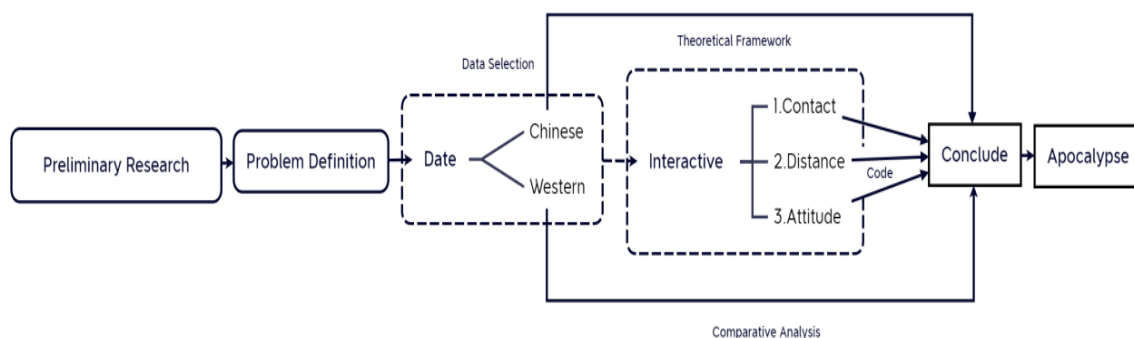


Fig. 3. Research process

Results of the Research

This investigation reveals that animated film posters transcend mere static visual representations, functioning instead as conduits for dynamic social communication and interaction. Within the scope of this study, an exhaustive classification and coding of the multifaceted elements present in the posters were meticulously conducted, furnishing a holistic comprehension of the interactive meanings embedded within Chinese and Western animated film posters. The elucidation of these interactive dimensions is graphically represented in Fig. 4, underscoring the posters' pivotal role in mediating cultural and communicative exchanges. Through this analytical endeavor, the study contributes to the scholarly understanding of visual media as interactive spaces, where meanings are not only displayed but also actively negotiated and interpreted across diverse cultural contexts, thereby enriching the discourse within the field of intercultural relations.

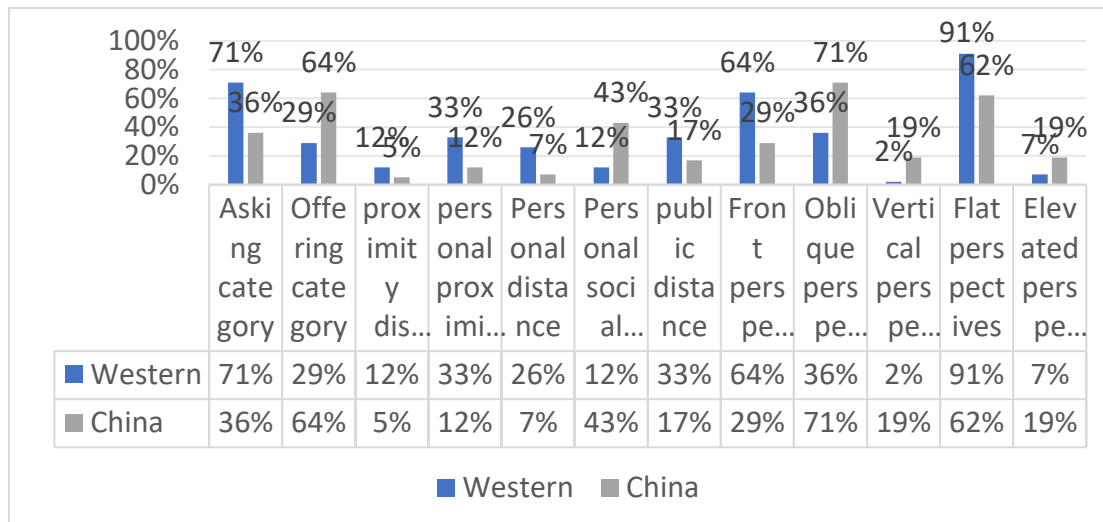


Fig. 4. Analysis of the Interactive Meaning of Chinese and Western Animated Film Posters

Supply, Demand and Contact Constructs of Vision

In examining the contact factor in the interactive meaning model, attention was focused on the gaze direction of the central figure in the poster, which was divided into two types: “asking” and “offering”. Among them, the “asking” type of images triggers the audience’s sense of participation and seeks their response by making direct eye contact with the audience, while the “offering” type of images conveys information to the audience without making direct eye contact.

The results of this study show that Chinese animated film posters differ significantly from Western animated film posters in terms of visual contact. Chinese posters are more likely to show the “offering” type of eye contact. As shown in Table 1, 27 out of 42 posters used the “offering” category, accounting for 64% of the total visual contact. Western posters, on the other hand, favoured the “asking” type of eye contact, with a total of 30 posters using the “asking” type of eye contact, accounting for 71% of the total.

Table 1
Exposure Analysis of Animated Film Posters

	Asking category	Offering category
China (reference point)	15	27
Western (reference point)	30	12
China (percentage)	36%	64%
Western (percentage)	71%	29%

Framing Distance and Social Distance Construction

In everyday interactions, social relations play a crucial role in the social distance between people. As Edward Hall points out, there are a number of invisible boundaries between people that construct a relationship of relative separation and independence. This internal sense plays a key role in interpersonal interactions, shaping the perception of and distance from others and one's own space.

The embodiment of “proximity distance” in the poster is limited to the depiction of faces or heads, representing the degree of closeness between the protagonist of the poster and the viewer, and this degree of closeness actually reflects the psychological distance between the viewer and the film characters. How this distance is handled has a profound effect on the audience’s emotional resonance and willingness to interact. When designing posters, it is important to realise the “proximity distance” through the skilful use of visual means according to the specific context and target audience of the poster. According to Data Table 2, there are only 2 Chinese animated film posters with “personal proximity”, accounting for 5% of the total number of posters, while there are more Western posters with “personal proximity”, accounting for 5 posters or 12% of the total number of posters.

The “personal proximity” posters show the head and shoulders, allowing the viewer to get very close to the elements in the image, giving the viewer an intimate connection and interactive experience with the characters in the poster. This sense of distance is even stronger than the sense of closeness, making the viewer feel as if they were there. Comparing the Chinese and Western posters, China makes less use of the “personal proximity” treatment, with only 5 posters representing 12% of the total, while the West has 14 posters representing 33% of the total.

“Personal distance” is shown only above the waist of the other person, giving the viewer a sense of relative distance and separation from the poster figure. This contrasts with “personal proximity”, which emphasises the independence and separation between the viewer and the poster figure, giving the viewer a relatively calm and objective visual experience (Koutsikou & Christidou, 2021). The use of this technique in China is significantly lower than in the West, with only 3 posters, or 7% of the total, compared to 11 posters, or 26% of the total.

“Social distance” allows the viewer to see the whole character and his environment (Koutsikou & Christidou, 2021). In this way, the social relationships and social context of the characters in the poster are revealed, making the viewer pay attention to and reflect on the content of the poster and enhancing their perception and understanding of the poster. Although “Social distance” can give viewers a certain understanding of the image scene, it does not cause strong emotional fluctuations like interpersonal distance. It is worth noting that the use of “Social distance” is much greater in China than in the West, with 18 images, or 43% of the total, compared to 5 images, or 12% of the total, in the West.

In “public distance”, the viewer sees the torsos of at least four or five people (Mulya, 2020). The distances that people keep from each other depend on their social relationships, and these distances also determine the extent of each other’s presence in the viewer’s field of vision. China also has a higher number of “public distance” scenes than the West, with 14 Chinese scenes, or 33 percent of the total, compared to 7 Western scenes, or only 17 percent of the total.

Table 2

Distance Analysis of Animated Film Posters

	proximity distance	personal proximity	Personal distance	Social distance	public distance
China (reference point)	2	5	3	18	14
Western (reference point)	5	14	11	5	7
China (percentage)	5%	12%	7%	43%	33%
Western (percentage)	12%	33%	26%	12%	17%

Perspective and Subjective Imagery Construction

The choice of perspective is a direct way of reflecting attitude. Horizontal perspective can be divided into frontal and oblique. At the horizontal level, the frontal perspective represents an attitude of involvement and participation, which allows the viewer to face the elements in the picture directly and feel a sense of closeness and immediacy. The oblique perspective, on the other hand, represents an attitude of detachment or spectatorship, which gives the viewer a more objective and transcendent feeling. This choice can reveal the degree of the author's involvement with the content of the image or his or her attitude towards it. In frontal perspective.

The proportion of Front perspectives in Chinese animation posters is much lower than in the West, while the proportion of oblique perspectives is exactly the opposite, and the proportion of oblique perspective in Chinese posters is higher than in the West. As shown in

Table 3, there are 12 frontal Chinese animation posters, accounting for 29% of the total, and 30 oblique posters, accounting for 71% of the total. In contrast, there are 27 frontal perspectives in the West, accounting for 64% of the total, and 15 oblique perspectives, accounting for 36% of the total.

At the vertical level, viewpoints can be categorised as top-down, flat and elevated. The top-down perspective suggests that the viewer has a sense of power and control. This perspective often makes the observed object appear small or secondary, emphasising the authority and importance of the viewer. The flat perspectives, on the other hand, represents an attitude of equality and intimacy; it places the viewer and the observed subject on the same level and conveys a sense of equality and interaction. The elevated angle, on the other hand, represents the participant's sense of power and majesty, emphasising the importance and prominence of the observed object, making it appear tall, powerful or striking.

It was found that Chinese animated film posters also differ greatly from Western film posters in terms of vertical perspectives, of which there are 8 Chinese top-down perspectives, accounting for 19% of the total, and only 1 Western top-down perspectives, accounting for only 2% of the Western posters. There is also a big difference in the flat perspectives, with 26

Chinese animated film posters in flat perspectives, accounting for 62% of the total, and 38 Western posters, accounting for 91% of the total. There is also a large gap in the vertical perspectives, with 8 Chinese posters, or 19% of the total, and only 3 Western posters, or 7% of the total.

Table 3
Attitudinal Analysis of Animated Film Posters

	Front perspectives	Oblique perspectives	Vertical perspectives	Flat perspectives	Elevated perspectives
China (reference point)	12	30	8	26	8
Western (reference point)	27	15	1	38	3
China (percentage)	29%	71%	19%	62%	19%
Western (percentage)	64%	36%	2%	91%	7%

Conclusions and Implications of the Study

Research Findings

There exist significant differences in eye contact, social distance, and perspective selection between Chinese and Western animated film posters, reflecting distinct aesthetic orientations and creative ideologies grounded in different cultural contexts. Chinese posters tend to exhibit “offering” types of eye contact and distant compositions, influenced by traditional Chinese painting, emphasizing the integration of figures with nature and setting a higher social distance. In contrast, Western posters prefer “asking” types of eye contact, close-up and medium-shot compositions, focusing on character details and narrativity, with a lower social distance, and are more inclined to adopt frontal and eye-level perspectives in their choices. These differences are closely related to the cultural values and thematic selections of both sides.

Differences in eye contact between China and the West

It is found that Chinese animated film posters tend to show the “offering” type of eye contact, while Western posters tend to show the “asking” type of eye contact. This finding is similar to previous studies. One study pointed out that the frequency of the “offering” category is very high in traditional Chinese picture books, where 98% of the 159 pictures used the “offering” category of visual communication with the audience, while only 2% of the pictures had the “asking” category of visual communication with the audience. “Asking” type of interaction (zheng, 2020). Similarly, a study in 2023 found that 93.7 per cent of the 592 posters from the Changchun Film Studio from 1949-1999 used the “offering” category, while only 6.3 per cent used the “asking” category of visual contact (Astria Muzdalifah, 2023). Only 6.3% used the “asking” category of visual contact. This is a marked difference from the design of visual contact in Western posters.

Within the interdisciplinary field of intercultural relations, the nuances of non-verbal communication, particularly eye contact, emerge as pivotal elements in mediating cross-cultural interactions. This study underscores the profound disparities in the norms governing eye contact between Chinese and Western cultures, a facet that significantly influences the design and interpretation of visual media, including animated film posters. In Western cultural contexts, direct eye contact is valorized as a conduit of politeness and empathy, serving as a non-verbal affirmation of the interlocutor's presence and significance (Nørgaard, 2023). Conversely, in Eastern, specifically Chinese, cultural paradigms, the avoidance of sustained, direct eye contact is imbued with respect, aiming to mitigate potential discomfort or embarrassment, thereby safeguarding the other's dignity and personal space (Liang, 2023). This behavioral norm is intricately linked to the valorization of privacy, conflict avoidance, and the preservation of harmonious social interactions.

Moreover, this aversion to direct gaze in Chinese culture is emblematic of deeper societal values such as modesty and the inclination to maintain a demure presence, attributes that are deeply enshrined in the cultural ethos. The divergent perceptions and practices surrounding eye contact in these cultural spheres pose a significant challenge in the realm of visual communication design, particularly in the crafting of animated film posters intended for trans-cultural resonance. The representation of eye contact in these visual artifacts must be meticulously calibrated to navigate the cultural sensibilities and expectations of diverse audiences, thereby encapsulating the essence of the depicted narratives while fostering an inclusive viewer engagement.

Acknowledging these cultural dichotomies is pivotal for practitioners and scholars alike, as it enhances the analytical depth in the examination and conceptualization of visual media across cultural boundaries. However, it is imperative to recognize that these cultural generalizations, while informative, are not prescriptive. Individual variances and contextual nuances invariably influence the manifestation of eye contact norms, underscoring the complexity of human behavior and the multifaceted nature of cultural expression. Consequently, a nuanced understanding of these intercultural differences, coupled with an appreciation for individual and situational specificity, is indispensable in the design and analysis of animated film posters, enriching the dialogue between cultures through the universal language of visual art.

Distance and Aesthetic Differences

This study delves into the nuanced delineation of spatial configurations within Chinese and Western animated film posters, uncovering significant cultural variances in the representation of social and public distances. The findings illuminate a marked predilection for portraying greater social and public distances in Chinese animated film posters, as opposed to the Western tendency to emphasize intimate, personal proximity and distance. Such divergences in character positioning not only underscore distinct cultural and aesthetic paradigms but also reflect the profound influence of traditional artistic heritage on contemporary visual design.

The design ethos underpinning Chinese animated film posters is profoundly shaped by the venerable tradition of Chinese ink painting, which is emblematic of the cultural reverence for the symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature. This artistic tradition customarily

employs a panoramic perspective, positioning characters within a sprawling, harmonious tableau of natural elements. This compositional approach serves to emphasise the majesty of the natural landscape against the relative insignificance of the human figures, creating a contemplative narrative that transcends mere visual aesthetics to evoke a sense of existential introspection. This spatial treatment, a hallmark of traditional Chinese ink painting, is exemplified in masterpieces such as Li Sixun's *"The Pavilion with River Sails and Pavilions"* and Li Zhaodao's *"The Luck of the Ming Emperor in Shu"* from the Tang Dynasty, as well as Ma Yuan's *"The Treading of Songs"* from the Southern Song Dynasty and Mi Youren's *"Clear Clouds at a Distant Canyon"* from the Northern Song Dynasty (



Fig. 5). These works are characterized by their use of distal compositions, where characters are intricately integrated into the expansive vistas of landscapes and clouds, thereby creating a profound sense of spatial depth and philosophical meditation.

Echoing these artistic precedents, Chinese animated film posters frequently adopt a similar distal composition strategy. Key characters or scenes are strategically situated within central or significant locales of the poster, surrounded by extensive scenes and negative space that contribute to the creation of a deep, immersive spatial experience. This compositional technique bears a striking resemblance to the visionary ethos of traditional Chinese ink painting, thereby encapsulating the enduring legacy of Chinese cultural and aesthetic principles in contemporary visual media. Through this comparative analysis, the study elucidates the intricate interplay between cultural heritage and modern design practices, highlighting the pivotal role of traditional artistic motifs in shaping the spatial narratives of Chinese animated film posters.



Fig. 5. Comparison between Chinese posters and traditional Chinese paintings. The design principles governing Western animated film posters are intrinsically intertwined with the cultural and aesthetic ethos prevalent in Western societies, drawing significant inspiration from the canon of traditional Western painting. This artistic heritage is characterized by a steadfast commitment to realism, with an acute emphasis on the verisimilitude of character representation. Such fidelity is manifest in the meticulous depiction of character features, including the nuanced rendering of skin texture, the subtle dynamism of facial musculature, and the reflective qualities of the eyes. The precision in these portrayals not only showcases the artisanal prowess of the painter but also facilitates a deeper viewer engagement with the character's persona, engendering a more intimate understanding of their essence and narrative role.

Furthermore, the predilection for close-up and medium shot compositions within traditional Western portraiture serves as a conduit for the expressive conveyance of characters' internal states and emotive landscapes. This compositional strategy, rooted in the narrative-driven ethos of Western art, enables the visual medium to encapsulate a holistic story or a poignant scene within a singular frame. Such narrative density not only augments the visual intrigue of the artwork but also streamlines the viewer's comprehension and emotional resonance with the artist's thematic intent.

This tradition of narrative and character-centric composition is adeptly appropriated in the design of Western animated film posters, as illustrated in Fig. 6. By adopting close-up and medium framing techniques, poster designers are able to spotlight principal characters or pivotal scenes, magnifying facial expressions and detailing corporeal nuances, or delineating the spatial and interactive dynamics among characters. This focus not only captures the audience's visual attention but also succinctly communicates the core themes and narrative arcs of the animation. Through the strategic employment of these compositional techniques, derived from the rich tableau of traditional Western painting, the poster serves as an evocative visual synopsis of the animated narrative, effectively bridging the viewer's perceptual and emotional engagement with the underlying story.



Fig. 6. Comparison between Western animated film posters and Western paintings

Chinese and Western animated film posters show obvious differences in terms of social distance. The differences in the social distance setting of the posters deeply reflect the differences in their respective cultural qualities and aesthetic orientations. The social distance setting of Chinese animated film posters is deeply influenced by traditional Chinese paintings, so the posters have many similarities with traditional Chinese paintings in creating the

atmosphere and characteristics of the scene, reflecting the flavour and aesthetic characteristics of Chinese culture. On the other hand, the design of Western animated film posters is influenced by Western local culture and aesthetics, paying more attention to visual authenticity. These different design concepts and aesthetic orientations make Chinese and Western animated film posters show very different style characteristics in the design of social distance.

Thematic Perspectives and Attitudinal Differences

The comparative analysis of viewpoint selection within Western animated film posters reveals a pronounced preference for frontal viewpoints in horizontal compositions and a predominant use of flat viewpoints in vertical arrangements. This stylistic predilection, embraced by an overwhelming 91% of Western posters, underscores its status as a predominant design convention. In stark contrast, Chinese animated film poster design exhibits a more eclectic approach to perspective, notably embracing both top-down and bottom-up views with a frequency that markedly surpasses their Western counterparts.

This divergence in perspective orientation is rooted in the fundamental disparities in thematic choices that distinguish Chinese and Western animated films. Chinese animated film posters are frequently inspired by a rich tapestry of traditional mythological narratives, such as “*Ne Zha*”, “*Feng Shen Yan Yi*” and “*Journey to the West*”. These stories, steeped in a wealth of imagination and mystique, offer an inexhaustible wellspring of creative inspiration for poster designers. The narrative complexity and character diversity inherent in these tales—ranging from mortals and deities to demons and mythical creatures—necessitate a versatile application of perspective to aptly convey the distinct essence and emotive depth of each character.

Conversely, the thematic repertoire of Western animated film posters is distinctly different. While Western tradition is not devoid of myths and legends, the scope and integration of such narratives into the film medium appear more constrained when compared to the expansive mythological canon of China. Moreover, the Western animation industry has shown a tendency to converge more closely with contemporary reality, exploring themes of science fiction and modern societal issues in works like “*Light Year*”, “*The Bad Guys*” and “*Big Foot Family*”. This thematic orientation towards the present and the futuristic has informed a stylistic preference for perspectives that facilitate a direct, unembellished portrayal of characters' emotions and personalities.

Consequently, the thematic inclinations of each cultural context significantly influence poster designers' perspective choices. Chinese animation's emphasis on the ethereal and the enigmatic prompts a preference for perspectives that elevate these qualities, while Western animation's focus on realism and contemporaneity tends towards the use of frontal and flat perspectives to render characters in a relatable and authentic manner. This thematic and perspective dichotomy endows Chinese and Western animated film posters with distinct visual and emotional textures, reflecting the profound impact of cultural and thematic predilections on visual storytelling in animation.

Research Suggestions

When designing animated movie posters, it is essential to thoroughly understand and respect the cultural differences between China and the West, which encompasses various aspects such as eye contact, social distance, and perspective choices. For posters of "New Chinese Style" animated films, it is advisable to retain the characteristic preference for avoiding direct eye contact, reflecting the humility and respect inherent in Chinese culture. Additionally, incorporating composition and framing techniques inspired by traditional Chinese ink painting can help create a distinct sense of space and atmosphere unique to Chinese culture. On the other hand, posters targeting Western markets could incorporate more direct eye contact and use close-up or medium shots to strengthen the emotional connection between the audience and the characters, aligning with Western aesthetic preferences.

Furthermore, in terms of perspective selection, "New Chinese Style" animated movie posters should maintain their diversity, particularly in the use of high-angle and low-angle shots. Western market posters, in contrast, may lean more towards frontal and eye-level perspectives. It is also crucial to consider individual differences and specific contextual factors during the design process. Through market research and user testing, designers can better understand the needs and preferences of the target audience, ensuring that the posters resonate across different cultural backgrounds while effectively conveying the theme and narrative of the animated film.

Research Contributions

This scholarly endeavor embarks on an intricate exploration of the nuanced interplay between Chinese and Western animated film posters, employing the theoretical lens of visual grammar to dissect and understand the multifaceted dialogues these visual artifacts establish with their audiences. The objective is to unearth the underlying design paradigms and cultural narratives that inform the creation of animated film posters and to assess their implications for the animation industry's evolution and innovative trajectories. The contributions of this research are manifold, extending the boundaries of existing scholarship in two pivotal areas: Comparative Analysis: The study's methodological rigor is evidenced by its selection of a diverse array of animated film posters from both Chinese and Western contexts as primary research artifacts. This corpus of visual data underwent a meticulous comparative analysis, not only scrutinizing aesthetic elements, thematic content, and cultural underpinnings but also delving into the dynamic interactions between these posters and their respective audiences. This comparative scrutiny illuminated the divergent strategies employed by Chinese and Western posters in engaging viewers, highlighting the influence of cultural distinctions on audience reception and interaction. By revealing these differential patterns of engagement, the study enriches our comprehension of cross-cultural visual communication strategies within the animated film sector.

Research Design and Methodology: Distinguished by its innovative methodological framework, this study transcends traditional analyses focused on singular or homogenous poster samples. It pioneers a comprehensive approach, conducting an expansive, multi-sample analysis that juxtaposes Eastern and Western animated film posters. Utilizing the qualitative data analysis software, Nvivo, this research undertook a systematic coding of multiple elements within the posters, generating a substantial analytical framework of 336 nodes. This methodological advancement not only enhances the precision and depth of the

findings but also establishes a robust template for future scholarly inquiries into the visual grammar of film posters.

In summation, the study's meticulous comparative analysis, coupled with its pioneering research design, not only foregrounds the distinct ways in which Chinese and Western animated film posters converse with their audiences but also underscores the critical role of cultural nuances in shaping visual communication. The insights gleaned from this research offer a valuable contribution to the discourse on design principles in animated film posters and signal new directions for the innovation and development within the global animation industry.

Research Limitations and Perspectives

While this investigation has yielded noteworthy insights into the intricate dynamics of interactive meaning within Chinese and Western animated film posters, it is imperative to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in its scope and methodology. Initially, the corpus of research predominantly encompasses posters from a delimited temporal span and geographic locus, which, albeit insightful, may not encapsulate the full spectrum of cultural and temporal diversity. This recognition paves the way for subsequent scholarly endeavors to broaden the empirical base, incorporating a more expansive array of samples that span diverse epochs and regions, thereby enriching the representativeness of the findings and enhancing the generalizability of the conclusions drawn.

Moreover, the study's reliance on a qualitative analytical framework, while instrumental in unraveling the nuanced layers of interactive meaning embedded within the posters, introduces an element of subjectivity inherent in interpretative analyses. The qualitative lens, though profound in its ability to capture the depth and subtlety of cultural narratives, is invariably colored by the researcher's perspectives, potentially narrowing the focus and limiting the objectivity of the interpretation.

In light of these considerations, it is propounded that future research endeavors might fruitfully adopt a mixed-methods approach, synergistically integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Such an interdisciplinary strategy would not only mitigate the subjective bias inherent in purely qualitative analyses but also afford a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the interactive semiotics of animated film posters. By quantitatively corroborating qualitative interpretations, this comprehensive approach would facilitate a more robust and multidimensional exploration of the semiotic interplay between cultural artifacts and their audiences, thereby advancing the academic discourse on intercultural visual communication within the animated film industry.

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