

# Emotions, Visual Rhetoric, and Pragmatic Inferencing in Campaigning Discourse

Vincent Tao-Hsun Chang

*National Chengchi University/Taipei, Taiwan*

**Key words:** advertising discourse, implicature, multimodality, relevance, visual rhetoric

## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the dialogic relations between form and function in multimodal discourse by looking into the print advertisements for the Olympics 2008 released by Mainland China. Data for analysis are chosen on the grounds that, first, the wordings in Mandarin Chinese are simple, slogan-type, e.g. Aoyun re, re bian jingcheng! ('The Olympic Fever Heats the Whole Beijing'); but creatively interweaving the Games' logo with attractive pictures and colour symbolism concerning Beijing City through which the messages could be plenty. Secondly, they encourage the (active/imaginative/creative) audience to integrate the semiotic elements (linguistic slogans and visual images) to trigger cognitive contextual effects, namely pun, irony, metaphor and humour, and will perform various pragmatic/communicative functions thereafter. Thirdly, they are ideologically significant for conveying the frames of the Olympic humanistic spirits – harmony and peace, promoting and enhancing traditional/wide-ranging Chinese culture, inviting and persuading the audience to recognise the prominent values in a fresh and friendly style.

The audience's mental processing/inferential processes of perception, comprehension and interpretation in multimodal communication are approached within Relevance framework (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995; Forceville, 2005; Noveck & Sperber, 2004). She searches for optimal relevance in the interpretation process, during which a wide array of implicatures involving feelings, attitudes, emotions and impressions would be inferred and derived from non-/verbal communication together with the contexts, depending on different degrees of involvement and shared cognitive environment. The sociocultural aspect of visual communication and language use is further explored to see the inseparable relationship between sign systems/language and social meaning. Lending itself as a symbolic arena for embracing competing ideologies, multimodal discourse displays the gist of, and adds interest to, social semiotic interpretability, reflecting the social cohesion/interaction and cognitive dynamics of communicator and audience, thus maintaining the dialectical relationship between sociocultural structures and social practice/discourse (Fairclough, 1995).