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CULTURE SELLS: ANALYZING NEW ORIENTAL'S LIVE-STREAMING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FROM A FRAMING PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The entire online retail ecosystem is changing as a result of China's livestreaming e-commerce. Among the new stars, Dong Yuhui, 29, an educated former offcampus English language tutor at New Oriental Education & Technology Group, rose to fame thanks to the Group's live-streaming program "Dong Fang Zhen Xuan". Unlike those live-streamers that specifically sell products at the best price, this presenter used a distinctive verbal communication method that once contributed to a 21-million-yuan GMV on a single day, making it the 6th most cash-earning broadcast room on Douyin. The author chose the cognitive linguistic method to evaluate one of Dong Yuhui's most popular YouTube video clips to understand how he achieved success, paying particular attention to media priming, Hart's discursive strategy, and George P. Lakoff's framing and metaphor theories. By decoding his priming strategy when introducing the subject and a later metaphorical structure, the results suggest that this live streamer's success may largely be due to his careful choice of stimuli for an ideal integration of the explicit frames, as well as the perfect blending and coherence between explicit and implicit frames. Despite a slight disconnection in the middle of his discourse, the findings of this study encourage communication experts and professionals to take into account incorporating linguistic practices and tactics based on a positive, resonant, and coherent frame with their plans to shift consumers' perceptions and decisions.

Keywords: live-streaming, e-commerce, discursive strategies, framing, CLA

Introduction

In May 2016, Alibaba's Taobao Live entered the market to mark a new era of online shopping after the constantly flourishing Taobao.com. It offered at that time a fresh approach by integrating an online livestream broadcast with an e-commerce store to allow viewers to watch while making their preferable purchases. In 2020, Taobao Live generated an explosive \$7.5 billion in total transaction value within the first 30 minutes of Alibaba's Singles' Day presales campaign. In McKinsey's projection (Arora et al., 2021), it indicates that live-commerce-initiated sales could account for as much as 10 to 20 percent of all e-commerce by 2026.

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Holding a shared vision, other Chinese tech and e-commerce players including Baidu, JD.com, Douyin, the Chinese version of Tik Tok and its competitor Kuaishou, Pinduoduo, and the leading fashion platform MOGU, have also jumped in, bringing their featured products such as cosmetics, beauty aids, fashion, and food.

In addition to promotional, operational, and financial support from these tech giants, the success of this business model is inseparable from another critical part: the live-streamers.

Livestreamers And Their Programs

A live-streamer is a program "host" or "presenter" who is responsible for warming up before the program starts, followed by introducing at the beginning of the livestream, engaging with viewers while selling the well-curated products using a mixture of tactics.

One of the most sensational cases is Jiaqi (Austin) Li, also known as the "Lipstick King" who used to be worth a reported \$5 million. This livestreamer has established a highly distinctive style of demo'ing lipstick on his own lips, which attracted 6.5 million followers on his Taobao Live, with a nightly audience of 2 million viewers. Another mega livestreamer Viya (Wei Ya), beloved by a number of renowned brands like Tesla, Proctor and Gamble, has even built her own fashion line and factory. (Greenwald, 2020)

As fame rises and popularity grows, many other smaller businesses are also eager to test the water with more unusual items: agricultural products. Farmers become presenters with their on-spot demonstration to convince consumers to place an order. During Alibaba's week-long livestreaming Harvest Festival, 390,000 bottles of Fan Si Shu chili paste from Yongshun, Hunan province were sold, equivalent to 255 tons of chili peppers. (Pandaily, 2022)

So far, it seems fair to agree that within merely six years, the e-commerce ecosystem in China has undergone a transformative change from the types of businesses, venues (where the activity takes place), livestreamers (the presenters), and curated products. Even so, "form follows function," as stated by Sullivan's famous axiom, the core of this business is to sell and what matters here is: how do they sell?

To narrow down this research challenge, I'll check through previous studies on live-streaming communication tactics. It will identify the most significant factors in developing positive relationships between audience members and live-streamers, or even between consumers and brands, followed by a cognitive linguistic approach to measuring the effectiveness of priming and framing strategies in a live-streaming environment, as addressing this problem will have practical benefits for communication experts and professionals in various industries to persuade their target consumers with less misunderstanding.

Live-streaming Communication Tactics

Several studies have been proposed to the communication strategy or tactics to succeed in live-streaming programs, some focusing on the viewer–streamer relationships that are fostered during the live-streaming engagement and social exchange with multiple objects and dimensions (Chen, 2023),

and the viewer stickiness, flow experience, as well as the purchase behaviors of virtual gifts (Guan, 2020). Both paid equal attention to viewers' social exchange and stressed that viewers' social perception, referring to the perceived proximity to the streamer and sense of belonging to the viewer crowd, can contribute to the viewer stickiness and flow experience can be transferred from other experiences (Guan, 2020).

While the two authors emphasized on social perceptions of viewers, researchers Wang Yubo and Pan Danting chose to tackle the problem from the perspective of the social discourse design of streamers (Wang & Pan, 2022). Their study suggested that a smooth, engaged, and motivated experience comes from "frequent use of interactive symbols", "emotional personal expression", the vertical screen, and the high-modal background element, accented by the presenter's opening remarks, conversation history, and body posture.

On the contrary, (Ouyang, 2022) reminded researchers of more potentially critical factors from the point of view of viewers' personal preferences, indicating that consumers are mainly concerned with four key aspects when watching live-streaming programs: appearance, personal style, product quality, and credibility.

In the present studies, analyzing live-streaming communication tactics was constrained to social perceptions and personal preferences of viewers, based on PLS-SEM and content analyses. I agree with the effectiveness of the variance-based structural equation modeling technique but I argue that the result of content analysis is less convincing according to the limited scale of audience comments on 5 Douyin videos, adopted by the author. Nevertheless, there is one investigation that can contribute to my tentative study by using multimodal analysis and audience design theory to discuss streamers' discourse marks and multimodal features of the technology. It sheds light on the fact that an additional approach is therefore needed for examining the discourse used by streamers to deepen our knowledge of language strategy and planning in the field of live commerce.

Hart's discursive strategy and George P. Lakoff's framing and metaphor theories are thought to be the most applicable. (Chen et al., 2019) study the discriminatory discursive methods used in online interactions between different power groups from Mainland China and Hong Kong in reaction to two YouTube videos regarding the Hong Kong Umbrella, or Occupy Central, Movement over the last five years. (Hanna et al., 2019) examine holidaymaking discourse gleaned from interviews with self-described "eco" or "sustainable" visitors. (Mottura, 2021) chooses to investigate the discursive strategy in which the item is embedded and promoted by examining Chinese political discourse from a diachronic perspective between 2013 and 2019. (Lapasau et al., 2020) utilize a descriptive qualitative technique to study the use of emotion-specific metaphors in Andrea Hirata's Tetralogy Laskar Pelangi based on the metaphor categorization of Kövecses (2015) and Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphors (1980). (Brdar et al., 2020) evaluate the figurative uses of metaphors and metonymies in transplantology discourse. And (Gorina, 2021) investigates the possibilities for using metaphorical framing in the construction of a culture-centric picture of Russia. Each attests to the theories' sound implementation in social discourse analysis.

To continue, I'll look at the case of Dong Yuhui, a popular live-streamer in China. The reason for selecting this iconic streamer stems from his background as an educated former off-campus English language tutor at New Oriental Education & Technology Group, his unique personal style that

incorporates a distinct verbal communication method that once contributed to a 21-million-yuan GMV on a single-day, making it the 6th most cash-earning broadcast room on Douyin (Global Times, 2022), and his unusual collection of products including books, corns, rice People who enjoy and buy from Dong Yuhui's live room describe him as a "culture salesman," and his live-streaming method as a "refreshing manner of aiding farmers, increasing knowledge, and revealing humanity." (野禽禽, 2022)

Following that to dispel certain doubts, this research is designed based on an agreement that Dong Yuhui does sell culture and succeeds in a way characterized by a clever discursive strategy, to deliberately answer the question - "How has Dong Yuhui primed and framed his speech for his sensational live-streaming program?".

Method

To answer the research question, I scrolled through extensive videos and clips of Dong Yuhui's livestreaming programs, one of which with 7343 views uploaded by a Youtuber @baisiye attracted my attention. The 10-miniute video clip titled "新东方老师董宇辉直播带货片段,内涵解读《平凡的世界》,人可以平凡,但不能平庸" live-streaming video clip of New Oriental's Dong Yuhui. Thorough interpretation of the book Ordinary World. Men can be ordinary but they can't be a mediocrity) is ideal for further investigation due to 1. sufficient and coherent text content for analysis given a 10-miniute video length; 2. a typical showcase of Dong Yuhui's speech style as the topic starts with a book and the content is decoded with his personal views; 3. the work Ordinary World by Chinese author Lu Yao is a widely known novel by many native audiences, which gives Dong Yuhui a greater opportunity to engage deeply with the live-room viewers; 4. adequate attention from the audience according to the number of views and comments, which proves substantially the success of this strategic communication.

After establishing the source, the data collection began with transcribing his speech from 00:00 to 10:04 of the video and ended up with 3003 words. The following analytical methods adopted the theory of media priming, Hart's discursive strategy, and George P. Lakoff's framing and metaphor theories to divide the text into two parts: 1. lead-in or introduction (117 words) and 2. interpretation (2886 words). The first component aims to assess how well the presenter has primed his content. Priming is defined as providing contextual cues to a non-conscious information process that activates certain patterns in memory, i.e. the audience members' awareness of an issue (Carroll & Einwiller, 2014). According to (Luoma-aho et al., 2019), positive priming increased the perception of authenticity, while negative priming decreased it. Furthermore, positive priming affects both the speaker's authenticity and attitudes toward the endorsed video and product.

The second aims to evaluate whether the presenter has purposefully chosen or built a refined framework, as well as his use of non-metaphorical and metaphorical frames to achieve frame blending and frame coherence. (Hart, 2014) believes that by framing strategies, speakers can conceptualize salient knowledge in order to gain access to specific knowledge domains, resulting in a pattern of reasoning. Categorization serves to classify objects, entities, actions, events, and situations as an "idealized cognitive model" (Lakoff, 1987). It is thus a comparison-based construal operation, a fundamental cognitive ability (Langacker, 1987). Categories are subject to "semantic contagion"

(Charteris-Black, 2006), which might result in a double metonymy. And specific classifications can refer to frame experience because the concepts they signify activate evaluatively laden frames or scripts (Fillmore, 1982; Schank & Abelson, 1977), which in turn give the foundation for understanding the profiled notion. Another significant element in ideological communication and persuasion is a metaphor (Charteris-Black, 2004, 2006; Koller 2004). A discourse containing only one frame is non-metaphorical; and in the case of consisting of two frames, it produces a metaphorical frame. A mapping interaction between more than two frames results in frame blending, and a denoting relationship between multiple frames results in frame coherence, which improves discourse's communicative power. Words only activate exterior architecture (Lakoff, 2006), but in proper frameworks, ethical beliefs and worldviews, i.e., deep architecture, can be stimulated, which matches the values of the audience. Such discourses are more likely to win the audience's support. (汪少华, 2014).

Therefore, this current study sets out to test if the presenter has benefited from effective priming and frameworks that facilitate communication and persuasion based on pre-existing values and ethics.

Results

For Part One, the presenter chose a group of stimuli such as "national college students", "most borrowed books", "library" while emphasizing on certain facts including "ranked Top 3", "about twice as much", and "internal data". Examples are as follows:

[1]....每年全国大学生借阅榜里头的前三名,而且常年霸占榜一...

[2]全国....图书馆是联网的,他们有内部数据.....这本书的借阅率比第二名要高出快一倍左右...

The use of terms like "national college students" is very much likely to recall the audience members' memories about their old days at college, especially when they needed to frequently borrow books from the library. Moreover, considering the wide-ranging backgrounds of viewers, there is a great possibility that many of them are current undergraduate or graduate students who may feel even more related when receiving a such message. Then intertwined with supportive data such as "ranked Top 3", and "about twice as much", the lead-in primes authenticity to back up the overall speech, which on one hand arouses the interest of those who may be not so familiar with this book or title, on the other hand, gives more confidence to those who may know this product but with little knowledge of it.

In Part Two, a 2886-word-long narrative, the presenter step by step reveals two well-structured frameworks that build on each other. (Figure 1) The concepts evolve from the prepared topics of "ordinary men", "difficulties", and the "world" to activate public experiences such as "society", "suffering", and "fragility" in Frame 1, in response to ideas including "roaring machine", "iron hammer", "pushing rock", "raw materials" in Fame 2. Ultimately, two frames are blended over time and form Frame blending 1, where the perceived concepts are defined as: the world is a machine, the difficulties are hammers, and ordinary people are as fragile as raw materials like ropes.

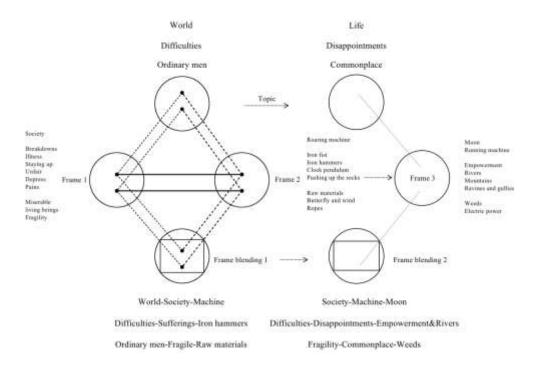


Figure 1. Basic model of conceptual integration (Fauconnier & Turner 2002)

Moving from Frame 2, the presenter added another Frame 3 to establish derived ideas from the existing perceptions. As the speech continues, the "roaring machine" in Frame 2 is replaced by the "moon" or "running machine" in Frame 3. Similarly, the "iron hammer" is weakened, and new concepts of "empowerment", "mountains and rivers" come to take their roots; "raw materials" and "ropes" yield to "weeds" and "electric power". As a result, the former Frame blending 1 is updated with different annotations to generate Frame blending 2, where "the world/society is not only a machine but also the moon", "the difficulties are not simply hammers but also practices and empowerment", and "ordinary people are as fragile as raw materials like ropes, but they are also weeds grounded to earth".

Discussion

Phase I Recall & Authenticity

The priming or initial frame in Part One, i.e. the introduction, is rather a simple, non-metaphorical frame to indicate the current social identities of some viewers, and activate partial college memories of many others. Meanwhile, the specific term "national college students" may be carefully chosen as an entry point of the general topic of the "ordinary world" since college students can be considered an essential part of "ordinary men". Additional data supporting the speech primes authenticity in the hearts of audience members, which paved the path for the later speech where more common experiences of the nation can be shared and reactivated.

Phase II Resonance

The following speech has adopted a complicated framework combination, mainly consisting of Frame blending 1 and Frame blending 2. The former starts from structured topics: "world", "difficulties",

and "ordinary men", and the three terms build on each other to lead personal views to a broader concept and story setting. Then a non-metaphorical frame is completed by introducing notions such as "society" that narrows the term "world", as well as a group of terms exemplified by "breakdowns", "suffering", and "unfair" that clarify what "difficulties" "ordinary men" can experience or feel. In addition, "ordinary men" are described as "fragile and miserable living beings". This first non-metaphorical frame hereinafter referred to as Frame 1, is a straightforward communication with audience members, which can quickly conceptualize their past negative experiences.

To arouse greater sympathy, a metaphorical frame, hereinafter referred to as Frame 2, is further introduced by referring to "society" as a "roaring machine", "suffering" as an "iron hammer" or "pushing up the rocks", and "miserable human beings" as "raw materials". Two frames hereto interact with each other to achieve frame blending and frame coherence, altogether contributing to Frame blending 1 that can be easily perceived based on a clear category: industrialization. Within this context, the audience is susceptible to "semantic contagion" (Charteris-Black, 2006) that activates personal feelings and shared knowledge about the situations under the setting of "urbanization" and "industrialization".

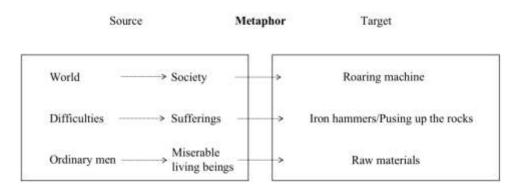


Figure 2. Metonymic reduction of the metaphoric source

In particular, given the specific COVID-19 global health crisis in recent years, Chinese citizens have been suffering physically, mentally, and financially from the disease itself and measures taken by the government. As the zero-COVID strategy continues in China, Hong Kong is experiencing negative shocks to capital investments and the labor force, with its equity fund-raising having dropped by 87 percent from the previous year of 2021; also, repeated lock-downs over the past years have led to shutdowns of factories, and car manufacturer VW suspended production amid the Shanghai COVID lock-down in March 2022. Some have even articulated that this policy may accelerate the gradual decline of manufacturing in China which is related to increased tariffs, higher wages, and geopolitical factors that started before the pandemic. (Hauck & Mehta, 2022) Therefore, there is reason to believe that the audience members watching this streaming program are more likely to call back negative feelings caused by ongoing difficulties so that the presenter wins the emotional support of the audience at this stage.

In the following speech, Frame 3 is added to shift the audience's perception from the negative side to a positive situation. The "society" becomes a moon according to the old Chinese saying "月有阴晴圆缺", meaning "in joy and sorrow people come and go, as the moon waxes and wanes". Additionally, the "roaring machine" introduced by Frame 2 turns into an idea of a "running machine" while the latter emphasizes more on people's subjective initiative. "Sufferings" described as "iron

hammers" or "pushing rocks" refers currently to "empowerment", and "mountains and rivers", which resets the context as an uplifting environment by adopting natural and grand elements such as "ravines and gullies" and "mountains and rivers". Similarly, "miserable human beings", previously referred to as "raw materials", are now "weeds" that stand against all winds and hardships, as well as "electric power" that is capable of "running the machine" (the society).

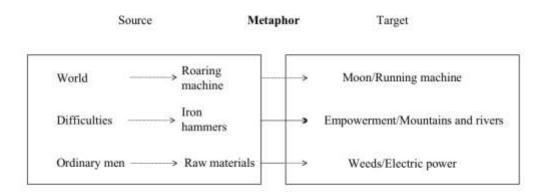


Figure 3. Metonymic reduction of the metaphoric source

Overall, Frame blending 2 rests on a categorized structure that is more human, and emotive, if comparing it with the idea of a ruthless machine in Frame blending 1. By first bringing up downs that active and recall those hard times in the heart of audience and then shifting them to ups that encourage and support viewers at the same time, the presenter has delivered a strategically designed speech, which primes, activates, resonates with audience members' memories before further echoing with their deeper worldviews and existing values. It is thus considered effective communication according to the frameworks and strategies discussed above.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study begins with the examination of past and current situations of the live-streaming industry in China, followed by clarification and introduction of the industrial key players - live-streamers. It identifies an exciting opportunity to look at Dong Yuhui, one of the hit live-streamers in China, given his unusual background, curated collections of products, and communication strategy, from a priming and framing perspective. After conducting a textual analysis on a selected 10-minute video clip, the results indicate that the lead-in part of his speech is set to recall and prime authenticity at the same time while the rest of it consists of two solid frameworks that intertwine with each other to achieve ideal integration of well-mapped concepts. Despite a minor discontinuity amid his speech, the study's findings inspire communication experts and professionals to consider implementing these priming and framing strategies based on a positive, resonant, and cohesive frame into their plans to influence consumers' impressions and decisions. They can be used in a variety of communication contexts, including branded campaigns, newsletters, films, brochures, and even interactive experience designs as UI components, among others. To be more specific, in the case of a newly launched home appliance, the idea of Cannikin Law, which is based on an analogy to the capacity of a wooden bucket with wooden stave sides and the implication that the capacity of such

a bucket is determined by the shortest stave, can be borrowed to stimulate the entire communicative context. Once the campaign is getting started, the wording and images can be made to represent real-life scenarios in which multiple talents of a person are necessary to complete the work, and success is determined by his or her largest shortfall. Such implications stimulate and activate target consumers' day-to-day experiences and cultural learning, making eventual communication messages from the product less confusing and more engaging. During the official launch, communication materials should be built on a firm foundation, utilizing terms like "every stave", "equal", "full capacity", "the load", and "level rises". After one framework is built, another that represents customers' unique expectations, such as the depth of pouring water, can be combined, allowing consumers to visualize the "full capacity" of this product, specifically the "bucket" in the current context. What I must underline is that this is merely one example that highlights its practical value; the applications are infinite. However, with regard to this study, limitations exist as this is a small-scale textual analysis and lacks triangulate examination from the point of view of audience members and their comments. Thus it encourages further research on the consumers' side.

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