Visual Metaphors and the Construction of Political Identities: An Audience-Perception Analysis of the 2012 Hong Kong Legislative Council Election

Steven Wong & Foong Ha Yap

Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Objectives

ॐ To elucidate how politicians compete for votes in election by using visual metaphors as an effective rhetorical strategy to construct and reinforce political identities during the 2012 Hong Kong LegCo election:

- positive identities for oneself
- negative identities for one's opponent

Overview

1. Introduction
   - Constructing political identities & mitigate face-threats through narration and metaphors
2. Research design & methodology
3. Preliminary data analysis
4. Use of visual metaphors in Hong Kong political discourse
   - The ladder metaphor
5. Conclusion

Introduction - Why use visual metaphors?

ↄ During election campaigns, politicians often try to accomplish the following two tasks:

  ↄ To promote themselves and their policies (self-praising);

  ↄ to challenge and discredit their political rivals (other-dispraising).

➢ To maintain such a delicate balance between attracting audience attention and engaging in face-threatening acts (FTAs) to others, candidates frequently rely on verbal indirectness strategies.

Why look at visual metaphors in political discourse?

- Metaphors:
  - To establish common ground with the public
    - they add a touch of novelty and wit to what is said, and thus greatly enhance the speaker's positive self-image;
  - To criticize their rivals, and thus indirectly promote themselves.
    - they can mitigate potential face-threats to both speaker and addressee.
    (Kuo 2003; Obeng 1997; Wilson 1990)

- Visual metaphors are "innovative and creative; they do not stem from pre-existing similarities, but induce similarities between different objects".
  - In this way, they help trigger a sense of wonder and delight in us and "contribute to our new understanding and perception of the world".

  (Yeung, Yung & Fan 2013: 7; citing Hausman 1989)

- Research Question:
  How do politicians use metaphors — in particular, visual metaphors — in electoral discourse?

Constructing political identities through narration/renarration during election campaign events

	Trump	Rubio
Construction of political identities	For self: successful entrepreneur For rival: inexperienced politician	For rival: untrustworthy and failed businessman
Narration/ Renarration	"I've hired tens of thousands of people over at my job. You've hired nobody. You've had nothing but problems with your credit cards, etc." (00:16-00:21) "I took $1 million and I turned into $10 billion, more than $10 billion." (3:04-3:08)	"You've hired a thousand people from another country… People can look it up… 'Trump Polish workers', you'll see a million dollars for hiring illegal workers." (00:17-00:45) "Here is the guy who inherited $200 million dollars. If he hadn't inherited two hundred million dollars, you know where Donald Trump would be right now? Selling watches in Manhattan!" (2:40-2:48)

Audience-Perception Analysis of the 2012 Hong Kong Legislative Council Election (Data Source)

ೞ Database: 5 televised debates hosted by RTHK

ೞ Period: 18th August – 1st September 2012

ೞ 50-60 minutes each
Total minutes of data: 290 minutes

ೞ Total no. of metaphors: 48 (visual and non-visual ones)

ೞ Gift-giving session (送大禮環節) inside the debate:
Candidates can present gifts, either to the public or to particular rivals. Most of the candidates would make use of this chance to attack the opponents.

Objectives & design of the computerized questionnaire

౮ To examine how politicians' use of visual metaphors help them to construct positive image for themselves and negative ones for their rivals when aggressively campaigning for votes

౮ Pre-test and post-test computerized questionnaire
  ౮ 43 participants were asked to indicate their impression of the public image of each candidate using a 10-point Likert scale
  ౮ participants were then shown videos of political candidates using visual metaphors to compete against each other and rated again

B. *Participant's perception of some 2012 Hong Kong LegCo Election candidates*
Below are brief descriptions of eight political candidates in the 2012 Hong Kong Legislative Council election. You will be asked to rate the public image of each candidate. A low socre indicates a negative public image, while a high score indicates a positive public image. On a Likert scale (with the lowest grade = 0 and the highest grade = 10; or "N/A" if you do not know this particular candidate), please indicate your perception of these candidates in response to the questions that follow.

People Power 人民力量

Wong Yeung Tat (YT) 黃洋達
Social activist
社會活動人士

12. On a scale of 0 to 10, how would you rate Wong Yeung Tat in terms of his public image? (Lowest grade = 0, Highest grade = 10)

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | N/A |

2ⁿᵈ time rating:

0:01 / 0:26

20. On a scale of 0 to 10, how would you rate Wong Yeung Tat's public image? (Lowest grade = 0, Highest grade = 10)

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

21. Please comment on some salient rhetorical strategies that you find interesting in his speech. (open-ended response)

Characters Remaining: 1000

Preliminary data analysis

Macro level: focus on the ideologies of rival parties

Personal level: character defamation of individual rivals

Candidate		Difference between 1st and 2nd rating	Statistically significant?
	Chan Han Pang	2.58 → 4.67 (↑ 2.09)	P-value (0.000003015) Yes.
	Lau Kin Yin	3.55 → 4.64 (↑ 1.09)	P-value (0.01148) Yes.
	Mandy Tam	3.88 → 4.91 (↑ 1.03)	P-value (0.0333) Yes.
	Wong Yeung Tat	3.71 → 3.76 (↑ 0.05)	P-value (0.8571) No.

Constructing political identities through narration/renarration during election campaign events
USING VISUAL METAPHORS

The Ladder Metaphor

@https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXMZhpdHsn4

01 CHP:	我哋	呢	今日	喺	呢一度	送	張	梯	畀
	ngo5dei6	*le1*	*gam1jat6*	*hei2*	*lei1jat1dou6*	*sung3*	*zoeng1*	*tai1*	*bei2*
	1PL	PRT	today	at	here	give	CL	ladder	DAT

02	全港	嘅	市民。
	cyun4gong2	*ge3*	*si5man4*
	all.Hong.Kong	ATTR	citizen

‘We are here today to present a ladder for all Hong Kong citizens,’

03	希望	呢	我哋	房屋	政策	呢	係
	hei1mong6	*le1*	*ngo5dei6*	*fong4uk1*	*zing3caak3*	*le1*	*hai6*
	hope	PRT	1PL	housing	policy	PRT	COP

04	有	房屋	嘅	階梯，			
	jau5	*fong4uk1*	*ge3*	*gaai1tai1*			
	EXIST	house	ATTR	ladder			

05	令到	劏房	嘅	市民	呢	可以	快啲	上到	公屋，
	ling6dou3	*tong1fong2*	*ge3*	*si5 man4*	*le1*	*ho2 ji5*	*faai3di1*	*soeng5-dou2*	*gung1uk1*
	make	sub-divided.units	ATTR	citizen	PRT	can	quickly	enter-POT	public.housing

'hoping that our housing policy is **the ladder** for (solving) our housing (problems), so that those who live in sub-divided units can move into public housing estates more quickly.'

06	小朋，	即係	後生	嘅	朋友	呢	可以	買得起	樓，
	siu2pang4	*zik1hai6*	*hau6saang1*	*ge3*	*pang4jau5*	*le1*	*ho2ji3*	*maai5-dak1hei2*	*lau2*
	children	that.is	young	ATTR	friends	PRT	can	buy-POT	house

07	中產	呢	亦	都	唔	需要	做	房奴。
	zung1caan2	*le1*	*jik6*	*dou1*	*m4*	*seoi1jiu3*	*zou6*	*fong2lou4*
	middle.class	PRT	also	EMP	NEG	necessary	do	housing.slave

'(We also hope that) the next generation can afford to own a house, (while) the middle class do not need to be the slaves of housing.'

08	亦都	係	要	送	畀	全港	嘅	青年人，
	jik6dou1	*hai6*	*jiu3*	*sung3*	*bei2*	*cyun4 gong2*	*ge3*	*cing1lin4jan4*
	also	COP	need	give	DAT	all.Hong.Kong	ATTR	youngsters

09	希望		呢	大家	喺	置業、		學業、
	hei1mong6		*le1*	*daai6gaa1*	*hai2*	*zi3jip6*		*hok6jip6*
	hope		PRT	everyone	at	home.ownership		studies

10	就業	同埋		創業	方面	呢，
	zau6jip6	*tung4maai4*		*cong3jip6*	*fong1min6*	*le1*
	career	and		start.up.business	aspect	PRT

11	有	一	個	向	上	流動		嘅	階梯。
	jau5	*jat1*	*go3*	*hoeng3*	*soeng6*	*lau4dung6*		*ge3*	*gaai1tai1*
	EXIST	one	CL	towards	up	mobility		ATTR	ladder

'(I would) also give it to all youngsters in Hong Kong, hoping that there will be a way (*lit.* ladder) for upward mobility in terms of home ownership, studies, career opportunities and business entrepreneurships.'

12	更加	要	將	呢	個	禮物	送	畀
	gang3gaa1	*jiu1*	*zoeng1*	*lei1*	*go3*	*lai5mat6*	*sung3*	*bei2*
	moreover	need	BA	this	CL	present	give	DAT

13	民主黨	嘅	第三	梯隊　，
	Man4Zyu2Dong2	*ge3*	*dai6saam1*	*tai1deoi2*
	Democratic.Party	ATTR	third	tier

'Fake goodwill' (sarcasm)

14	希望	你哋	有	機會	(.)	可以	爬	上	嚟。
	hei1mong6	*lei5dei6*	*jau5*	*gei1wui6*		*ho2ji5*	*paa4*	*soeng5*	*lai4*
	hope	2PL	have	chance		can	climb	up	RSV

'(I) should also present this gift to (the members) of the third tier of the Democratic Party, hoping that you have a chance to climb up (i.e. enter the Legislative Council).'

DAB vs. LSD

Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong vs. League of Social Democrats

LSD 社會民主連線

- Tsang Kin Shing(TKS)曾健成
- Left-wing
- Pro-democracy
- Pro-labour

Mocking DAB by using the ladder metaphor but invoking a different source domain – the ladder as the jumping-site for suicides
Meaning:
DAB is not helping HK people but sending them to death.

01 TKS:

民建聯	送	呢	張	梯	呢
man4gin3lyun4	sung3	lei1	zoeng1	tai1	le1
DAB	give	this	CL	ladder	PRT

02

係	逼	港人	呢	喺	天棚	擒	高一啲	跳樓	。
hai6	bik1	gong2jan4	le1	hai2	tin1paang2	kam4	gou1jat1di1	tiu3lau2	
COP	force	Hong.Kong.people	PRT	at	roof	climb	higher	jump.off.building	

03

因為	梁振英	上場	之後	呢，
jan1wai6	Loeng4Zan3Jing1	soeng5coeng4	zi1hau6	le1
because	Leung.Chun.Ying	come.to.power	after	PRT

04

樓價	再	升	多	一	成	。
lau4gaa3	zoi3	sing1	do1	jat1	sing4	
housing.price	again	go.up	more	one	tenth	

'DAB presented this ladder so as to force Hong Kong people **to climb up higher and jump to death from the roof**. It is because the housing price has gone up by ten percent since Leung Chun Ying came to power.'

What the visual 'ladder' metaphor does?

A ladder can be used to symbolise the following:

by Chan (metaphor)		by Tsang (rebuttal)	
The progress of the housing policy		The current stagnant housing policy (tragic inducement for some who despair to end their life)	
Upward mobility: - a better life for the general public - career development opportunities for the younger generation			
Encouragement to rival party – seen as 'fake goodwill'			

What the visual 'ladder' metaphor does

ം Provide a visual cue to make a more lasting impact in the memory of the audience

ം Create negative images of rivals through verbal indirectness

ം How political identities are constructed and reconstructed by rival parties

ം Symbolic representations behind a given metaphor can be interpreted differently by different political parties to compete for the audience's attention.

Conclusion (1)

க Politicians often engage in adversarial talk with their opponents.

க Yet at the same time, they often deploy verbal indirectness strategies to mitigate face threats through witty talk.

க This often includes the use of narrations and metaphors.

Conclusion (2)

ೞ Among the skills needed is the ability to 'attack' and 'counter-attack'.

ೞ The subtle and skillful use of verbal indirectness strategies including characterization metaphors is useful in creating positive political identities for selves and negative ones for others.

Acknowledgments

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Thank you~