

“Please continue to be an anime lover”:

**How political identities are constructed or damaged through
the deployment of characterization metaphor and humor
in Hong Kong political discourse**

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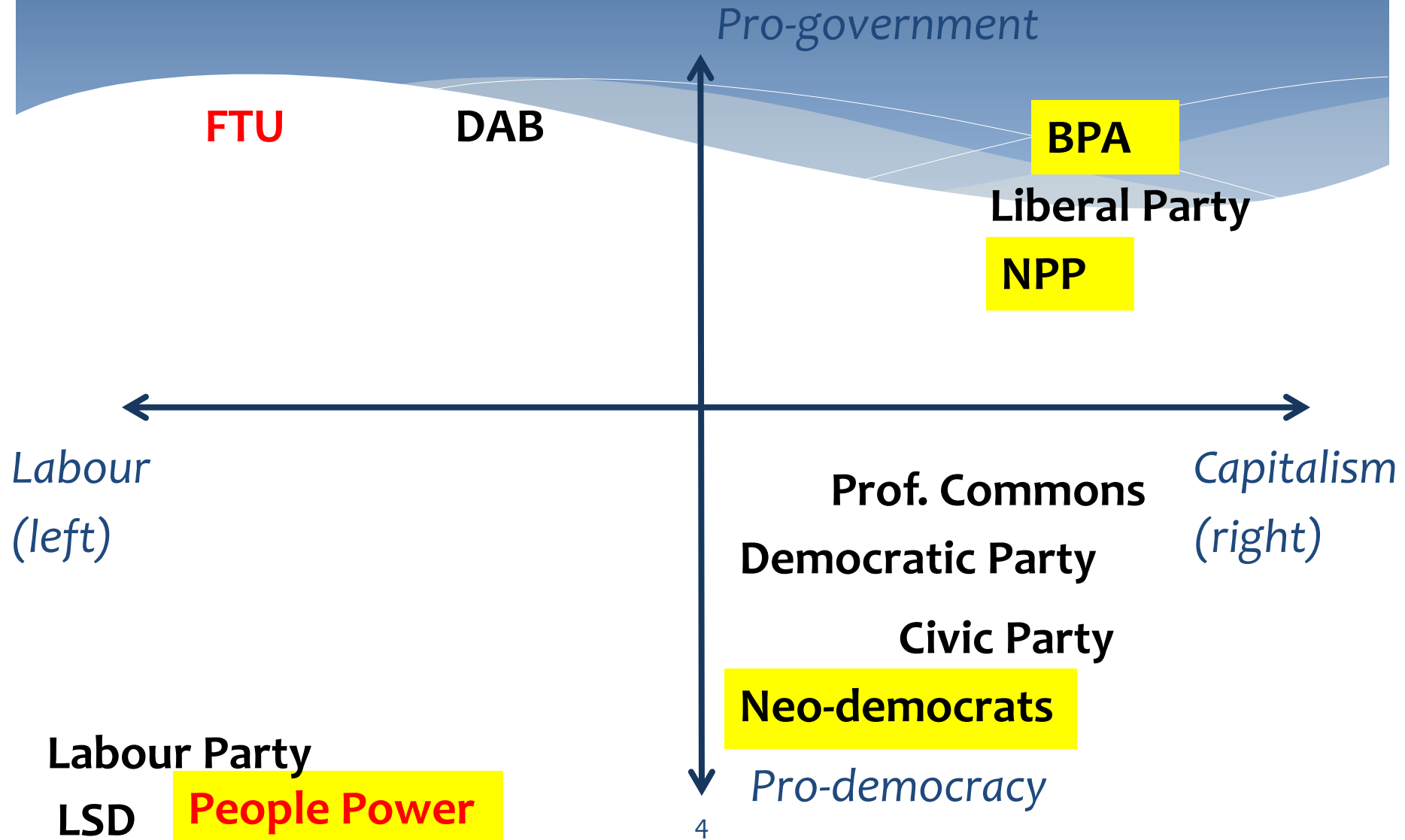
Objectives

- * To investigate how metaphor and humor, and the combination of both, are used as tools to construct the political identities of public figures.
- * To explore how these created identities are reconstructed by one's rival(s).

The socio-political background of Hong Kong

- * A relatively **recent process of democratization**
- * A series of **controversial issues** in recent years:
 - e.g. 2010 political reform package
 - unauthorized building works of government officials
 - unpopular national education curriculum
- * The **rise of many new political parties + independent Legislative Council (LegCo) candidates**

Political parties in Hong Kong



Metaphor and humor in political discourse

- * Numerous studies have been done on metaphor and humor in political discourse
 - * Metaphor (e.g. Chilton and Lakoff 1995; Kuo 2003; Obeng 1997; Wilson 1990)
 - * Humor (e.g. Bippus 2007; Morreall 2005; Tsakona 2009)

Metaphor and humor in political discourse (cont.)

- * Both are pervasive rhetorical strategies.
- * Both can attack or denigrate opponents in a less face-threatening way (Kuo 2003; Morreall 2005; Taskona 2009).

The use of characterization metaphors in political discourse (Chan and Yap 2012)

Characterization metaphor: A person or a political party is described as another fictional character or assigned another social role.

KTEast_34:11-34:55_TamHeungMan

01 嗰 今日 呢 我 送 個 演技 大獎 呢 畀
naa4 gam1jat6 ne1 ngo5 sung3 go3 jin2gei6 daai6zoeng2 ne1 bei2
INTJ today PRT 1SG present CL acting big.award PRT give

02 謝偉俊 ， 佢 扮 獨立 ， 又 扮 民主 喝 ，
Ze6Wai5Zeon3 keoi5 baan6 duk6laap6 jau6 baan6 man4zyu2 wo3
Tse.Wai.Chun 3SG disguise independent also disguise democratic PRT

03 又 扮 健康 佢 呢 ， 演技 精湛 。
jau6 baan6 gin6hong1 keoi5 ne1 jin2gei6 zing1zaam3
also disguise healthy 3SG PRT acting excellent

'So today I present an acting award to Tse Wai Chun, (as) he pretends to be independent and democratic. Also (he) pretends to be healthy ... His acting (is) excellent.'

Tse Wai Chun Paul = an actor

The construction and damage to political identity using humor (Tsakona 2009)

- * Investigated the use of humor in Greek parliamentary discourse
 - * Two protagonists involved: Greek prime minister & leader of the opposition
- * Function of humor:
 - * To construct a positive identity for oneself
 - * To attack one's opponent(s) without violating house rules
- * Whether the use of humor succeeds or not is related to the mode in that discourse (“humorous mode” vs. “serious mode”, cf. Mulkay 1988). In the parliamentary discourse, a serious mode often prevails. The use of humor may backfire.
 - Instead of creating a positive humorous image of himself, the prime minister may be viewed as frivolous.

This study

- * To analyze the use of characterization metaphors and humor in the construction of political identities.
- * To demonstrate how these constructions of political identities are closely linked to the common ground between the people who created the identity and the public.

Data

- * Database: 5 televised debates hosted by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) in the run-up to the 2012 LegCo elections
- * Period: 18th August – 1st September, 2012
- * 50-60 minutes each
Total minutes of data: 290 minutes
- * Metaphors analyzed based on the *Conceptual Blending Theory* (Turner & Fauconnier 1995; Fauconnier & Turner 2002)
- * Humor analyzed based on incongruity and absurdity models (e.g. Attardo 1994, 2001; Morreall 1987)

Data (cont.)

Table 1. Frequency of characterization metaphor and humor tokens in televised election debates

Category	No. of Tokens
Characterization metaphor	8 (57.1%)
Humor	3 (21.4%)
Combination of characterization metaphor and humor	3 (21.4%)
Total	14



Anime lover metaphor



Background

Wong Yeung Tat 黃洋達 (YT)

- * A democratic candidate
 - * A member of *People Power*, which is often labeled as a radical party in the local media



Wong Kwok Kin 黃國健 (KK)

- * A pro-government candidate
 - * The chairman of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU)
 - * The member of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB)
 - * Disguised himself as a ninja inside the Japanese manga *Naruto* 火影忍者 during his election propaganda
 - * Being accused of watching the movie *Hail the Judge* during a LegCo meeting



Televised debate held by RTHK

- * 2012 Legislative Council Election debate forum for the Kowloon East District
- * Date: 19th August , 2012
- * Gift giving session 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.

The first metaphor: Hail the Judge

01 WYT:我 呢，就 會 送 呢 個，**《九品芝麻官》** 嘅 VCD 呢畀 黃國健。
ngo5 le1 , zau6 wui3 sung3 li1 go3 , **Gau2Bun2Zi1Maa4Gun1** ge3 VCD le1 bei2 Wong4Gwok3Gin6.
1SG PRT about.toFUT give this CL **Hail.the.Judge** ATTR VCD PRT dat Wong.Kwok.Kin
'I will present this VCD of Hail the Judge to Wong Kwok Kin.'

02 咁 希望 你 呢，以後 就 唔好 開會 嗰 陣 呢，
gam2 hei1mong6 lei5 le1 , ji5hau6 zau6 m4hou2 hoi1wui5 go2 zan6 le2
so hope 2SG PRT from.now.on then do.not hold.meeting that time PRT

03 再 上網 侵權 睇 電影 喇。
zo13 soeng5 mong5 cam1kyun4 tai2 din6 jing2 laa3
again go.on.the.Internet infringe watch movie SFP

'I hope that from now on you won't go on the Internet to watch movies illegally during the meeting again.'

The first metaphor: Hail the Judge

- * Wong Yeung Tat presented the VCD of *Hail the Judge* to Wong Kwok Kin
- * Intending to remind the public of Wong Kwok Kin's improper behavior earlier in the LegCo meeting
- * Insinuating that KK is like **a lowest-grade (“9th grade”) government official in the Qing Dynasty**
- * Implied meaning of the 9th grade government official
 - * **Idle and insignificant**



The first metaphor: Hail the Judge

Generic Space

Main character
The character's status
in the political system
(Implied) traits of the character

Wong Kwok Kin
A non-outstanding
LegCo member
?

A "9th grade"
government official
The lowest-ranking official
Idle and insignificant

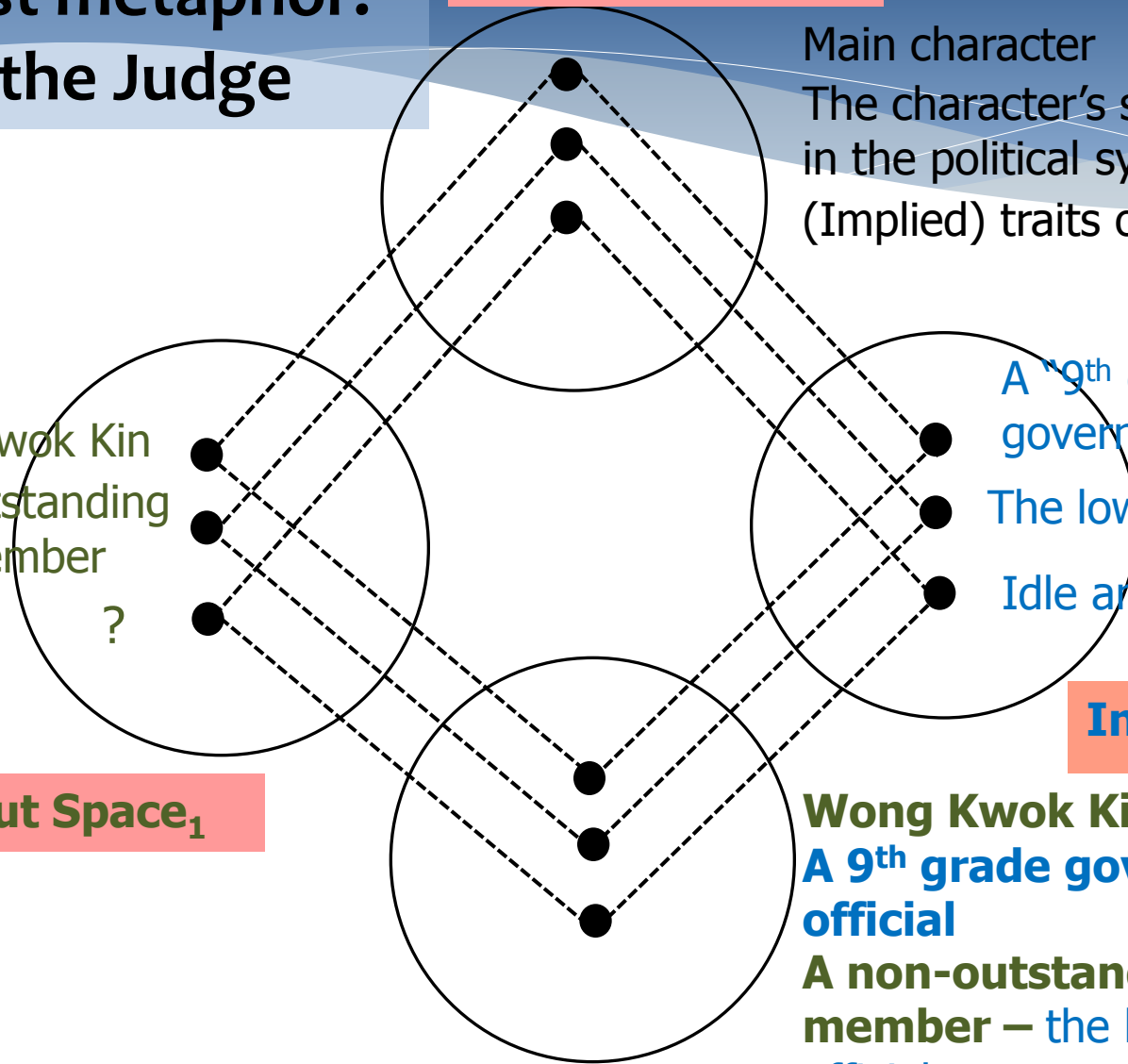
Input Space₁

Input Space₂

Blended Space

Wong Kwok Kin –
A 9th grade government
official
A non-outstanding LegCo
member – the lowest ranking
official

→ Implied meaning:
Idle and insignificant



Humor – Incongruity (1)

Set-up

01 WYT:我 呢，就 會 送 呢 個，《九品芝麻官》 嘅 VCD 呢畀 黃國健。
ngo5 le1, zau6 wui3 sung3 li1 go3, Gau2Bun2Zi1Maa4Gun1 ge3 VCD le1 bei2 Wong4Gwok3Gin6.
1SG PRT about.toFUT give this CL Hail.the.Judge ATTR VCD PRT dat Wong.Kwok.Kin
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gam2 hei1mong6 lei5 le1, ji5hau6 zau6 m4hou2 hoi1wui5 go2 zan6 le2
so hope 2SG PRT from.now.on then do.not hold.meeting that time PRT

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zoiz soeng5 mong5 cam1kyun4 tai2 din6 jing2 laa3
again go.on.the.Internet infringe watch movie SFP

Punch-line

'I hope that from now on you won't go on the Internet to watch movies illegally during the meeting again.'

Humor – Incongruity (1) (cont.)

- * **Expectation from audience:** [set-up]

- * YT would accuse KK of watching a movie during the LegCo meeting since this behavior was inappropriate for a LegCo councilor.

- * **Actual result:** [punch-line]

- * YT did not focus on the misconduct of KK as a LegCo councilor. Instead, he reprimanded KK for watching an online movie illegally.

→ Implication: The fact that YT did not focus on KK's inappropriate behavior as a LegCo councilor suggests that he does not view KK as a legitimate LegCo councilor.

- Created image or identity:
KK is **insignificant** in LegCo

Humor – Absurdity (1)

16 WKK: 咁 啊 講 咗 我哋 好 多 人 都 唔 明 白 嘅 嘢。
gam3 aa3 gong2 zo2 ngo5dei6 hou2 do1 jan4 dou1 m4 ming4baak6 ge3 je5
so PRT say ASP 1PL very many people also NEG understand ATTR thing
'And he said something which many of us did not understand.'

17 所以 呢，[其實 我哋 好]多 人 呢=
so2ji5 le1 [kei4sat6 ngo5dei6 hou2] do1 jan4 le1 =
thus PRT actually 1PL very many people PRT

19 WKK: = 都 要 上 網 搜 集 資 料。
=dou1 jiu3 soeng5mong5 sau2zaap6 zi1liu2
also need go.on.the.Internet search.for information
'So actually many of us needed to search for information on the Internet.'

20 WYT: 你 睇 《九品芝麻官》 搜 集 資 料?
nei5 tai2 Gau2Ban2Zi1Maa4Gun1 sau2zaap6 zi1liu2
2SG watch Hail.the.Judge search.for information
'You watched *Hail the Judge* to search for information?'

Humor – Absurdity (1) (cont.)

- * An absurdity arises because of the contrast between the genre to which “watching *Hail the Judge*” and “searching for information during a LegCo meeting” belong.
 - * *Hail the Judge* is a Hong Kong comedy film, which is to be watched for fun only [leisure, informal setting]
 - * KK refuted that he needed to go onto the Internet to search for information because of Wong Yuk Man’s filibustering [workplace, formal setting]
- * YT then associated the two events together. The incompatibility of the genres to which the two events belong will give rise to the absurdity, and thus the humor.

→ Implication:

- A **foolish** image was constructed: KK is an **incompetent, impudent and ridiculous** person.

The second metaphor: anime lover

06 你 啊 鍾意 cosplay, 扮 忍者, 又 放 鏢。
nei5 aa3 zung1ji3 cos1pei1, baan6 jan2ze2, jau6 fong3 biu1
2SG PRT love cosplay disguise.as ninja and throw dart
'You love cosplay, disguising yourself as a ninja and throwing darts.'

**Sets the tone
for the anime
lover metaphor**

07 跟住 喺 立法會 呢, 又 成日 舉手,
gan1zyu6 hai2 Laap6Faat3Wui5 lei1, jau6 seng4jat6 geoi2sau2
then at Legislative.Council PRT and always raise.up.hand

08 問 規程 問題 幾時 有得 食飯。
man6 kwai1cing4 man6tai4 gei2si4 jau5 dak1 sik6faan6
ask order question when have can eat.rice

'Then at the Legislative Council meetings, you always raise up your hands and ask when we can have a meal.'

09 我 覺得 都 好 難為 你。
ngo5 gok3dak1 dou1 hou2 naan4wai2 nei5
1SG think also very press 2SG
'I also think that's asking too much of you.'

**Spells out the anime
metaphor at the end
of his speech**

→13 你 去 繼續 做 動漫愛好者 啦 好冇?
nei5 heoi3 gai3zuk6 zou6 dung6maan6oi3hou3ze2 laa1 hou2mou2
2SG go continue do anime.lover SFP good.NEG

'So I hope that you will also support me to kick the pro-government party out, such that you people from the conservative party can be liberated. Please continue to be an anime lover, okay?'

The second metaphor: anime lover

Generic Space

Main character
Display of heroic behavior
Occasion for displaying heroic behavior
Purpose for such behavior

Wong Kwok Kin
Tries to cast himself
as a protector of
the people
Election propaganda
For political gain

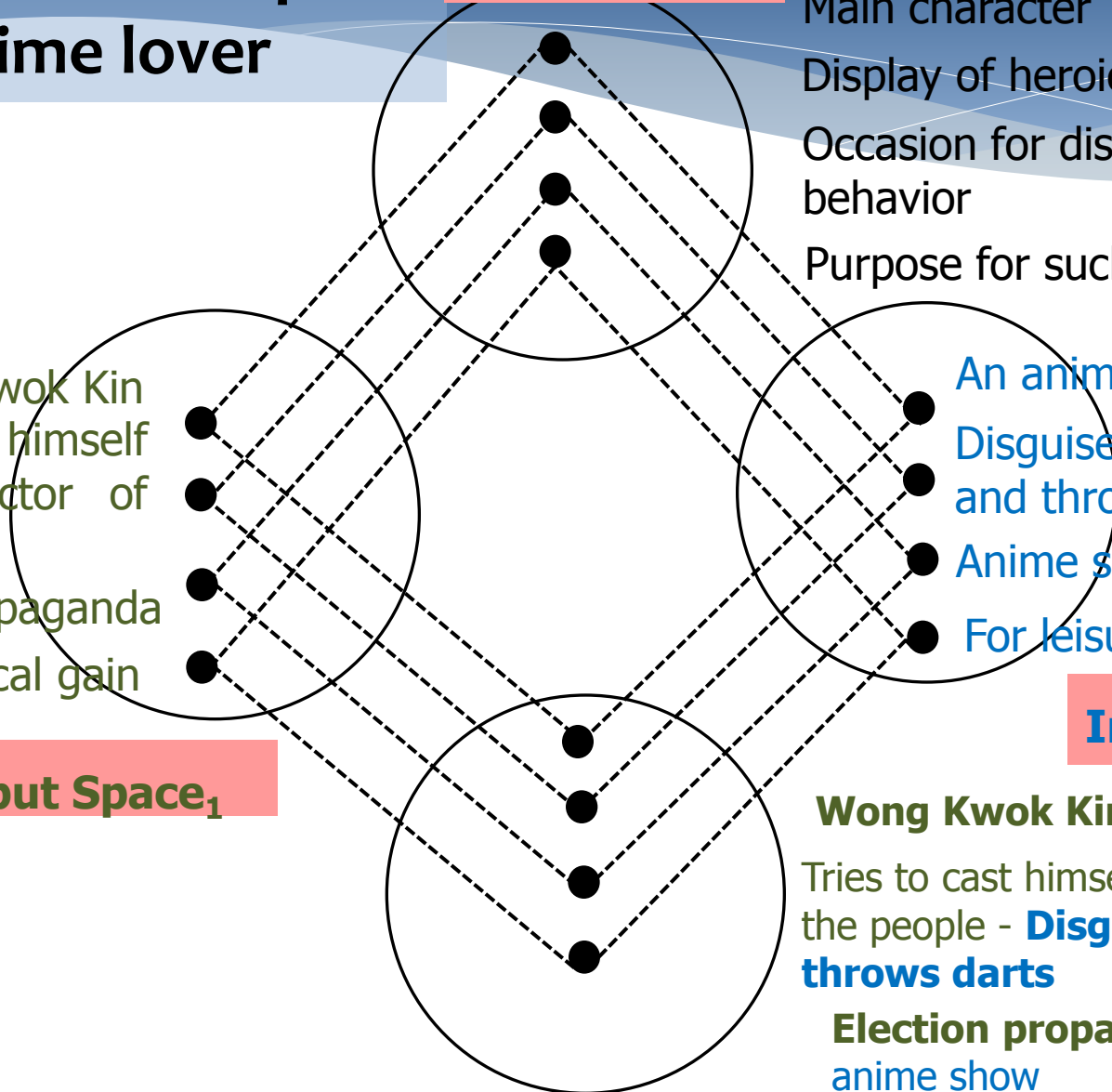
Input Space₁

An anime lover
Disguises as a ninja
and throws darts
Anime show/exhibition
For leisure

Input Space₂

Wong Kwok Kin - an anime lover
Tries to cast himself as a protector of
the people - **Disguises as a ninja and
throws darts**
Election propaganda -
anime show
For political gain - **for leisure**

Blended Space



Humor – Incongruity (2)

07 跟住 喺 立法會 呢，又 成日 舉手，
gan1zyu6 hai2 Laap6Faat3Wui5 le1 , jau6 seng4jat6 geoi2 sau2
then at Legislative.Council PRT and always raise.up.hand

Set-up

08 問 規程 問題 幾時 有得 食飯。
man6 kwai1cing4 man6tai4 gei2si4 jau5 dak1 sik6faan6 。
ask order question when have can eat.rice

‘Then at the Legislative Council meetings, you always raise up your hands and ask when we can have a meal.’

10 咁 所以 希望 你呢，都 支持 我呢，
gam3 so2ji5 hei1mong6 nei5 nei1 , dou1 zi1ci4 ngo5 le1
So therefore hope 2SG PRT also support 1SG PRT

12 就 踢走 保皇黨， 咁 就 釋放 番 你哋 班 建制派，
zau6 tek3zau2 bou2wong4dong2 , gam3 zau6 sik1fong3 faan1 nei5dei6 baan1 gin3zai3paai1
then kick.out pro-government.party such then liberate PRT 2PL CL conservative.party

13 你 去 繼續 做 動漫愛好者 啦 好冇？
nei5 heoi3 gai3zuk6 zou6 dung6maan6oi3hou3ze2 laa1 hou2mou2
2SG go continue do anime.lover SFP good.NEG

Punch-line

‘So I hope that you will also support me to kick the pro-government party out, such that you people from the conservative party can be liberated. Please continue to be an anime lover, okay?’

Humor – Incongruity (2) (cont.)

- * **Expectation from audience:** [set-up]
 - * YT would denounce KK as an idler who does not serve the citizens genuinely.
 - * YT would also make use of this chance to attack KK and his associated parties (FTU and DAB) and advocate that these parties deserve to be kicked out because they are useless and do not benefit the public.
- * **Actual result:** [punch-line]
 - * Instead of attacking KK and his associated parties directly, YT offered a mock-friendly move – YT said he was hoping to set KK and the other conservative parties free. Also, he encouraged KK to pursue his dream as an anime lover at the end using a rhetorical question.

→ Implication: KK does not belong to the political arena but to the entertainment anime arena. He should leave LegCo for his own good.

- An **unprofessional** image was constructed.

How is a political identity re-created?



- * Initial identity constructed by KK for himself / Assumed identity of KK
 - * KK disguised himself as an anime character in *Naruto* as a gimmick to appeal to the electorate, especially to the younger voters.
 - * Created identity: approachable, open-minded and keeping pace with the times
 - * Assumed qualities of a LegCo councilor: competent, professional and pragmatic

How is a political identity re-created? (cont.)

- * Wong Kwok Kin's recreated identity by Wong Yeung Tat
 - * **Hail the Judge**
 - * competent, professional and wise →
Idle, goofs around, foolish and insignificant
 - * **Anime lover**
 - * Approachable, open-minded and keeping pace with the times → childish and unprofessional

How is a political identity re-created (cont.)

- * Consistent with previous findings (Kuo 2003; Tsakona 2009), we can see that
 - * The mode (“Humorous mode” or “serious mode”, cf. Mulkay 1988) that prevails play a part in determining whether an identity can be (re-)created successfully.
 - * Election propaganda
 - * Metaphor can help to attribute a certain image to a character.

Conclusion

- * Characterization metaphors and humor can act as a tool to construct the image and political identities of a public figure.
 - * This is done by inviting the audience to search for conceptual links between the label and the target.
- * Other factors such as humorous vs. serious mode also plays a part in determining whether these identity creations are successful or not.

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