
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Semiotic Construction of Website Images of Chinese and Australian Memorial from the Perspective of Visual Grammar

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| ABSTRACT

Memorial are cultural institutions that preserve historical memory and convey national identity through visual symbols. Adopting a qualitative research approach, this study analyzes the web-page images of the Site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the Australian War Memorial within the theoretical framework of Visual Grammar (VG) proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen. The findings are as follows: Regarding representational meaning, the Chinese website prioritizes transactional reaction processes and symbolic processes to forge direct ideological connections, whereas the Australian website favors non-transactional reactions and classificational processes to encourage individual interpretation and factual clarity; Concerning interactive meaning, the Chinese website employs high-modality colors and high-angle perspectives to evoke emotional resonance and position viewers as inheritors of historical responsibility, while the Australian website uses low-modality colors and eye-level angles to foster introspective reflection and egalitarian dialogue; In terms of compositional meaning, the Chinese website adopts vertical layouts and implicit framing through color contrast to reinforce hierarchical narrative flow, whereas the Australian website utilizes horizontal given-new layouts and explicit framing lines to support step-by-step explanatory logic. Theoretically, this study extends the application of VG to semiotic construction of website images of memorials. Practically, it provides a reference for optimizing the website design of memorials across different cultural contexts.

| KEYWORDS

MDA, visual grammar, web-page image; memorial, semiotic construction

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

In the digital era, visual communication has become a crucial medium for cross-cultural exchange. As a window for cultural institutions to showcase themselves to the world, the construction of symbolic meaning in the images on their web-pages directly influences the transmission and comprehension of cultural information. Among the online communication practices of various cultural institutions, websites of memorials stand out as valuable research cases due to their unique role in preserving historical memory. Site of the 1st CPC National Congress, as the birthplace of the CPC, serves as a vital symbol of revolutionary history of China. The Australian War Memorial, on the other hand, is a core venue in Australia for commemorating war history and promoting national spirit. Both hold irreplaceable positions in their countries' cultural inheritance and identity construction. The web-pages of these two institutions convey distinct meanings through the presentation of diverse visual symbols.

Previous studies taking visual grammar as a theoretical framework have primarily focused on research objects such as promotional documentaries (Li & Niu, 2024), magazine covers (Zheng & Zhang, 2015), advertisements (Liu, 2020), and posters (Zhao, 2023; Rao, 2025). Although some research has chosen web-page images as research objects, the majority have concentrated on websites related to tourism (Zhao, 2025), educational organizations (Wang & Liu, 2022; Qiu, 2025), and governments (Liu, 2024). From previous studies, it is obvious that while VG has been widely applied in fields like advertising and

media (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), its use in cross-cultural studies of memorial websites requires further exploration and comparative research on Chinese and International memorial websites still lacks both theoretical and empirical depth. To address this gap, the study aims to interpret the meaning construction mechanisms of visual elements on both websites, revealing the influence of visual design on different cultures, which not only improves the application of visual grammar in the analysis of the memorial websites, but also provides insights for cultural institutions to optimize visual communication strategies and enhance cross-cultural narrative effectiveness.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Visual grammar

The theoretical architecture of visual grammar derives its foundation from meta-functional proposed by Halliday (1978), which identifies three constitutive dimensions of linguistic communication: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Corresponding to this tripartite model, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) delineate three analogous semiotic strata in visual communication: representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. Subsequent sections will explicate these dimensions through theoretical exposition and empirical exemplification.

2.1.1 Representational meaning

The representational meaning in VG corresponds to the ideational function in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), reflecting various events occurring in the objective and subjective world, and is achieved through participants and processes in the image (Wencai, 2025). According to the existence or absence of vectors, the representational meaning can be divided into narrative representation and conceptual representation. If there is a vector composed of diagonal lines between participants, it is a narrative representation which includes action processes, reactional processes, as well as mental and verbal processes. However, there is no vector in conceptual representation which typically involves the classificational, analytical and symbolic processes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

Narrative representation refers to the connection between participants through a vector, which signifies that something is being done or that participants are interacting with each other. The involvement of vectors is a defining characteristic of narrative processes, which reproduces actions, events, and processes of change unfolding in an image (Teng & Miao, 2018). In images, these vectors are formed by components that create a diagonal line----often a diagonal. If an image exhibits narrative representation, it must have the following features: connecting lines without directional indicators form an analytical structure, signifying that one thing is linked, combined, or associated with another. Narrative representation can be categorized into action processes, reaction processes, verbal and mental processes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Conceptual representation is another dimension of representational meaning. It differs from narrative representation in that it has no vectors (Zhang, 2024). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) divide it into classificational process, analytical process and symbolic process. Classificational process concerns the relationship between the subordinate and the superordinate. Analytical process relates participants in terms of part and whole structure. Symbolic process are associated with the meaning of participants.

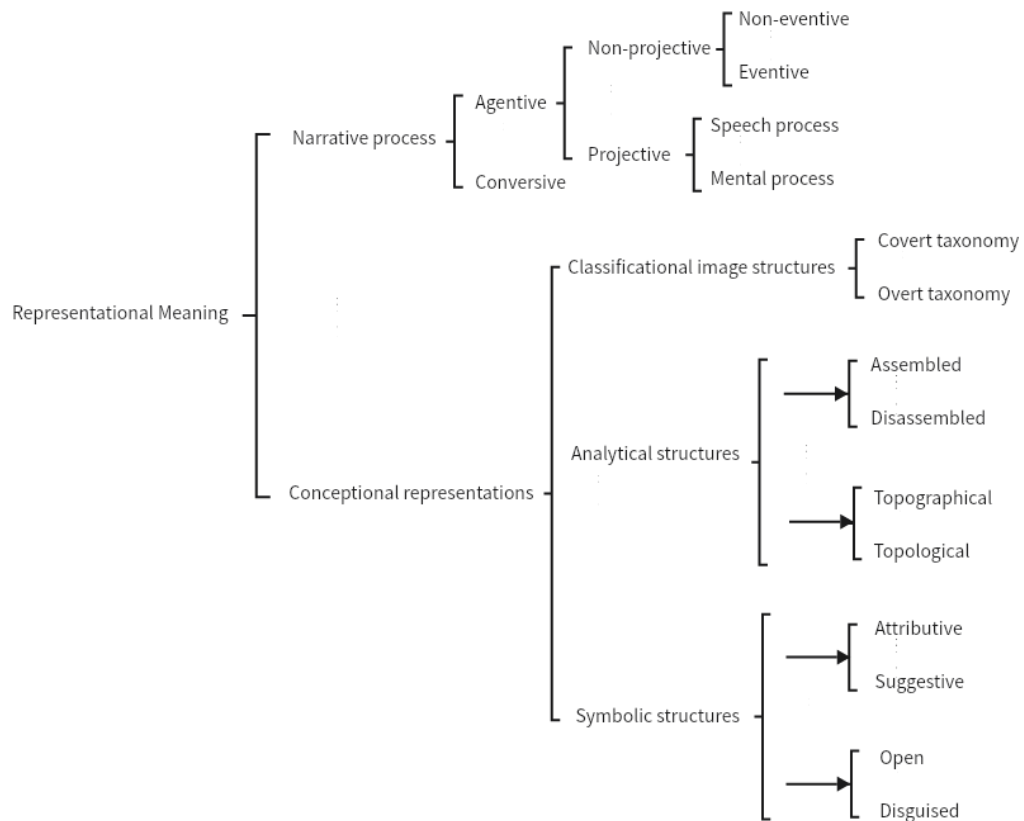


Figure 2-1

2.1.2 Interactive meaning

The interactive meaning emphasizes the mutual relationship between image participants and image viewers, and the realization of interactive meaning depends on four elements: contact, social distance, attitude, and modality (Kress & van, 2006). Contact identifies interactive relations in pictures from which represented participates look directly at the viewer's eyes, or in which this is not the case (Wang & Cao, 2024). It can be divided into two categories, namely demand and offer. Social distance refers to the distance between people and places or objects, which exhibits psychological closeness and can be divided into close, medium and long shot. The perspective expresses the subjective attitude of the viewer towards the image participants, and there are three different perspectives, including low, eye-level, and high angle reflect different attitudes. Modality is used to verify the authenticity and credibility of images, including high modality, medium modality, and low modality.

Image makers can build the relationship between the reproducer and the viewers through the choice of distance (Li, 2003). The distance between image participants and viewers can be called social distance which reflects the intimacy between them. Social distance can be realized by different shots including close, medium and long shot. These choices shape viewer's engagement: close shots evoke personal connection, medium shots maintain objectivity, and long shots emphasize context over individual interaction, guiding emotional and interpretive responses in visual communication.

Perspective, representing the angle or point of view, is another way to reflect the relationship between represented participants and interactive participants. An eye-level angle positions viewers as equals to participants, fostering neutrality, as seen in images of residents engaging in daily activities. A low-angle shot elevates the status of participants, symbolizing authority or admiration. Conversely, a high-angle shot diminishes participants' stature, often implying a sense of detachment. By selecting specific angles, image creators subtly guide viewers' emotional and ideological responses, fostering feelings of respect, equality, or detached observation depending on whether participants are framed from low, eye-level, or high perspectives.

Modality reflects the truthfulness and credibility of reality through a certain expression technique such as color, depth, representation and so on. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) believe that modality can be described from the following dimensions: color saturation, color differentiation, color modulation, contextualization, representation, depth, illumination and brightness. This study will discuss modality value from the perspective of color saturation, including high modality, medium modality and low modality.

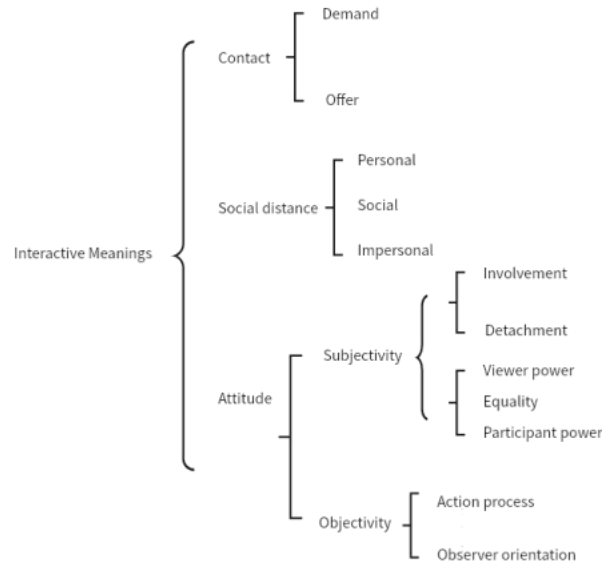


Figure 2-2

2.1.3 Compositional meaning

Compositional meaning is the correspondence of textual function in SFL which examines how multiple elements in an image form a meaningful whole. The realization of compositional meaning relies on three core elements: information value, salience, and framing.

Information value refers to the arrangement of elements in different positions, which helps analyze the relationship between images and text. Significance is achieved by highlighting the contrast between the foreground or background of an image, resulting in different levels of importance for image elements. Elements with higher significance are more important and emphasized.

Salience describes the degree to which elements can attract the attention of the viewer. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), salience can create a hierarchy of importance among the compositional elements in a discourse. Different places in the scene (foreground or background), different size, contrast of color, brightness and so on are put in images depending on their importance.

Framing is related to separation or connection between the constituent elements of an image. If there are clear lines between image elements that separate and isolate them, it indicates that each element has its own characteristics. On the contrary, if there is no separation between elements, the overall characteristics of image elements are emphasized. The more independent each element is, the more distinct the separation will be.

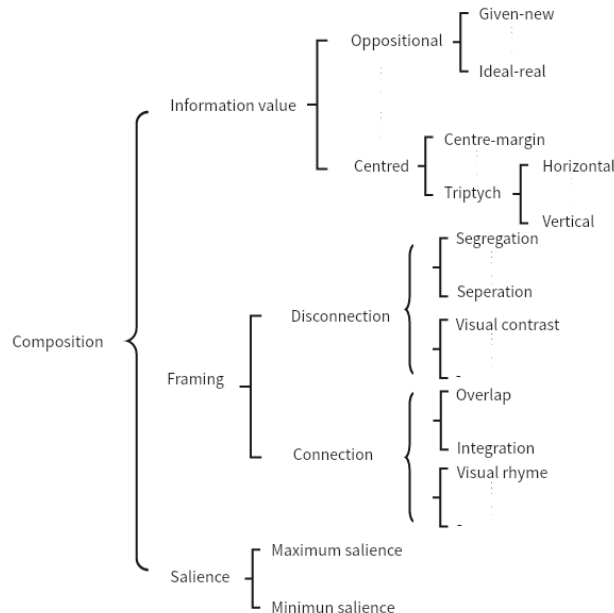


Figure 2-3

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The samples selected in this study were sourced from the official websites of CPC 1st Congress Memorial and Australian War Memorial. Site of the 1st CPC National Congress marks the birth of the CPC and has important historical significance. With abundant cultural relics, documents and photos, the Memorial shows the struggle course and glorious history of the CPC, and has a profound impact on the ideological enlightenment and education of Chinese youth. The Australian War Memorial is a national monument commemorating the 100000 soldiers who sacrificed in the nine wars that Australia participated in since 1788. It carries the collective memory of Australians for their sacrifices and serves as an educational and research center for war and military history. Both memorial are political symbols of their countries, conveying their different history and culture to the public through plentiful exhibits. This study will collect web-page images from official websites of these two memorial so as to compare and analyze the visual modalities of the web-pages.

Considering that the content of web-pages may be updated from time to time, all images are collected between March and April in 2025. The researcher preserves screenshots of typical pages from these two websites and then classifies and analyzes these images according to the three major meanings of VG. In this study, a total of 22 images are collected, including 11 images from the official website of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China Memorial Hall and 11 images from the official website of the Australian War Memorial.

3.2 Research methods

This study adopts a qualitative research method, using Kress and van Leeuwen's VG as the analytical framework, to examine the mechanism of meaning construction of visual symbols on the official websites of Chinese and Australian memorials. The specific methods are as follows.

Firstly, the core visual materials of the official websites of Site of the 1st CPC National Congress and the Australian War Memorial were collected, and organized according to the principle of thematic relevance. Subsequently, based on the three dimensions of visual grammar, an interpretive analysis of images was conducted. Representational meaning focuses on symbol selection (such as party emblems, red poppies) and their ideological metaphors; Interactive meaning aims to analyze the impact of visual guidance strategies (such as perspective design and modalities of color) on engagement of viewers; Compositional meaning analyzes the layout and hierarchical relationship between images and text. With the quantitative method offering a scientific view, this study intends to reveal how the websites of these two memorials construct differentiated historical memory narratives through multi-modal visual symbols, and systematically attribute similarities and differences based on the theoretical framework, ultimately achieving a holistic interpretation from symbol expression to cultural context.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Comparative analysis on representational meaning

4.1.1 Narrative representation

4.1.1.1. Action process

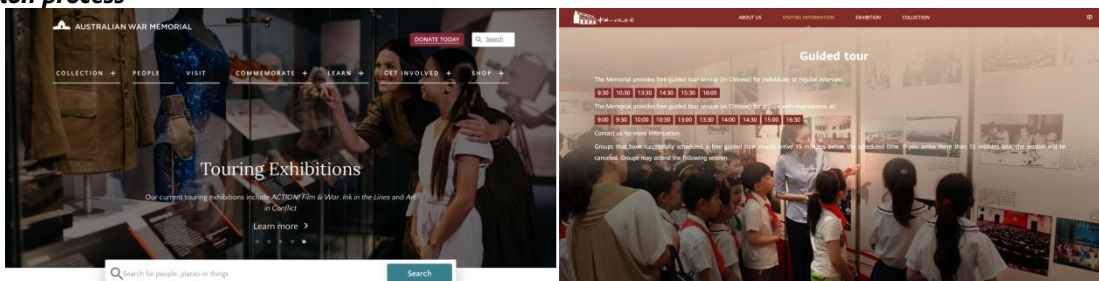


Image 4-1

Image 4-2

Images 4-1 and 4-2, sourced from homepages of the Chinese and Australian memorials respectively, exemplify the action process within the framework of visual grammar. In Image 4-1, an adult woman positioned on the left gestures towards exhibits within a display case. In this picture, the woman functions as the Actor, while the exhibit serves as the Goal. A vector---visually constructed through the alignment of her extended finger and arm---establishes a directional force that bridges the Actor and the Goal. Similarly, in Image 4-2, the female guide standing in the middle directs the students' gaze towards the photographs on the wall through hand movements. The guide assumes the role of the Actor, with photographs on the wall acting as the Goal. The vector in this instance emerges from the vector appears from the line connecting her extended arm and index finger, intensifying the dynamic engagement between the Actor and the Goal.

These two cases share a common feature: both memorials utilizes Actors and directional vectors to actively control viewers' engagement with the Goal. By physically pointing to exhibits or photographs, the Actors' gestures act as visual instructions, telling viewers where to look at and what to focus on. The intentional design of vectors ensures that viewers' attention is

channeled toward specific artifacts, preventing distractions and reinforcing the memorials' role as authoritative storytellers of national history.

4.1.1.2. Reactional process

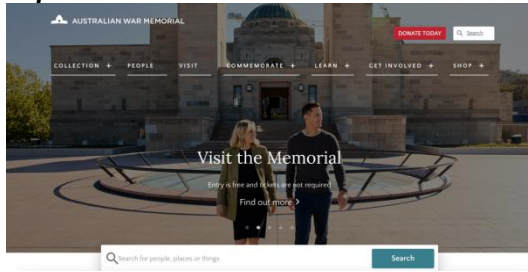


Image 4-3



Image 4-4

Image 4-3 is the homepage of the Australian web-page, and it belongs to a non-transactional reaction. In this case there is only Reactor but no Phenomenon. The man and woman are Reactors and they are looking somewhere, which leaves the viewer to imagine what they are looking at. Image 4-4 is from the Chinese website, and it belongs to a transactional reaction. The painting hanging on the wall form the Phenomenon, while the woman and the girl on the right side are Reactors. The vector is formed by the direction of the glance of the woman and the girl, which leads them to the painting on the left side.

The difference in this reaction process lies in the strategic choice of the Chinese and Australian websites between interactive openness and information certainty: Australia uses non-transactional reaction art to provide viewers with more interpretation space, focusing on emotional dialogue between individuals and history; China establishes a visual closed loop of phenomenon reaction through clear direction of transactional reactions, ensuring accurate decoding of historical symbols. Both serve their respective cultural dissemination goals: the former invites the audience to actively participate in meaning construction through the unfinished line of sight, while the latter achieves efficient transmission of historical narratives through the completed line of sight connection.

4.1.2 Conceptual representation

4.1.2.1. Classificational process

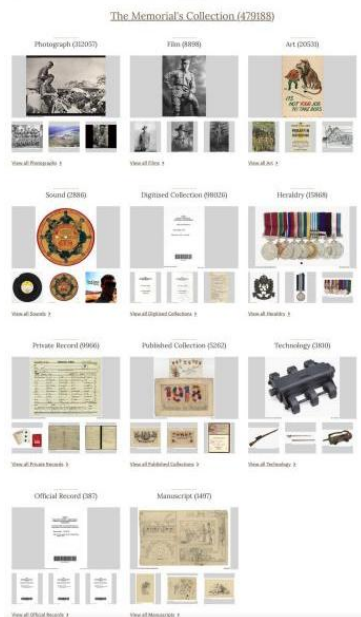


Image 4-5



Image 4-6

Images 4-5 and 4-6 illustrate classificational processes from the Australian and Chinese websites, respectively. In Image 4-5, the memorial collections are organized into 11 distinct subcategories under the superordinate label "The Memorial's Collection", which serves as a unifying conceptual framework. In this picture, the superordinate category encompasses subordinate elements, represented by 11 entries of different kinds of collections, each denoting specific subdivisions. Similarly, in Image 4-6, the superordinate is placed directly above the image in bold and capitalized form. A total of 8 subordinates are listed

in the following three images and displayed in white font. By consistently applying classification processes, the website groups related content into cohesive clusters, streamlining information retrieval and optimizing the searching efficiency for viewers.

This shared reliance on classificational processes highlights a practical goal: both memorials prioritize users' viewing experience through structured information. By dividing large amounts of content into labeled subcategories, viewers can quickly locate specific types of collections or departments without being overwhelmed by disorganized data. The hierarchical structure where upper categories lead to detailed subdivisions acts like a map, guiding viewers to search from general themes to specific topics. Such a design not only saves time for viewers but also reinforces the museums' professionalism by presenting information in a systematic and easily accessible manner.

4.1.2.2. Symbolic process



Image 4-7



Image 4-8

Image 4-7 is from the page of "Commemorate" of Australian War Memorial. It is a typical example of symbolic process. In the picture, the most salient part is a string of red poppies hanging on the left. This kind of flower flourished resiliently on the scarred battlefields of World War I, which mirrors the enduring spirit of fallen soldiers. Since then, the red poppy has become an emblem of sacrifice and hope, honoring those who perished or endured hardships in the throes of war. Besides, in the background of this image stands a stone monument engraved with the names of soldiers who lost their lives in the war, serving as a poignant symbol of remembrance and commemoration. The red Party emblem in Image 4-8 a vital symbolic icon of the Communist Party of China, and embodies the revolutionary spirit of Party's working-class through its distinctive visual elements---the sickle and hammer motif. This symbolic process transforms abstract political ideologies into tangible visual codes, enabling viewers to visually grasp the political connotations represented by the emblem.

Symbols like the red poppy and the Party emblem condense historical events or political values (e.g., sacrifice, revolution) into instantly recognizable images, allowing viewers to grasp the core message without lengthy explanations. Relying on culturally familiar symbols (e.g., poppies for Australians, the sickle and hammer for Chinese), memorial websites create a strong emotional connection, by which viewers recognizing these symbols will feel a sense of collective identity, as if the memorial is narrating their shared history or values. This approach not only makes historical events and ideological concepts more accessible in vision but also strengthens the memorials' role as custodians of cultural memory, where visual symbols serve as bridges to connect the past and present.

4.2 Comparative analysis on interactive meaning

4.2.1 Contact

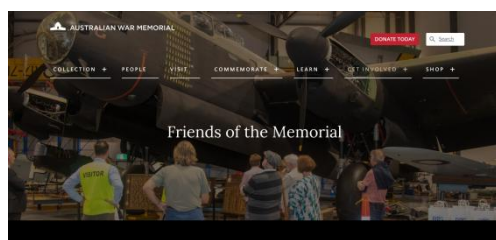


Image 4-9



Image 4-10

The image on the left captures a moment at the Australian memorial, where viewers stand absorbed in contemplation of the exhibits. Their upward gazes and slightly tilted heads suggest deep engagement with the display, creating an "offer" image---one that presents information objectively rather than seeking interaction with viewers. In the Image 4-9, however, the statue of our forebears stands solemnly in the memorial. Their profound gaze seems to penetrate time and space to engage us in a silent dialogue. In this eye contact, we seem to glimpse the summer of 1921, to see those revolutionary pioneers who held fast to their ideals in the face of adversity, and to witness the blood and sweat they shed for national rejuvenation. Through the statue's eternal gaze, a wondrous connection is forged between history and the present, allowing the spirit of our forebears to be inherited and perpetuated in this extraordinary manner.

By showing viewers observing exhibits from a distance (e.g., upward gazes, tilted heads), the image in Australian web-page emphasizes individual reflection. The lack of direct eye contact allows viewers to interpret history privately, mirroring Western museums' tendency to position viewers as independent observers to form personal conclusions. Nonetheless, in the web-page of Chinese website, the statue's unwavering eye contact creates an immediate emotional bridge between past and present. This intentional silent dialogue transforms viewers from passive onlookers into active inheritors of revolutionary spirits. This design embodies a cultural expectation: viewers can feel that historical figures are directly communicating with them, as if they are passing down their revolutionary spirit through the screen. In essence, Australian website's design encourages viewers to discover meaning independently, while Chinese website's design actively shapes a sense of shared responsibility through visual immediacy, which reflects how Australian and Chinese cultures shape the different roles of memorials: the former one serves as a historical library for individual exploration, while the latter one functions as a lecture hall prioritizing the inheritance of collective beliefs.

4.2.2 Social distance

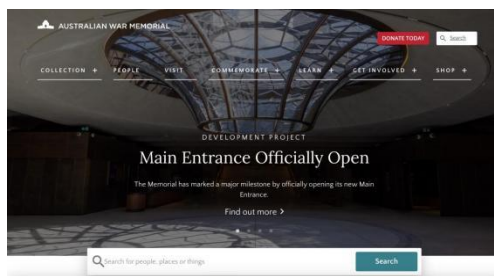


Image 4-11

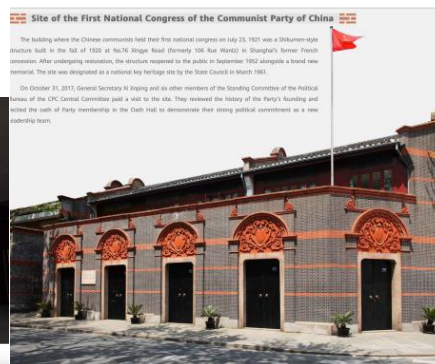


Image 4-12

Both image 4-11 and image 4-12 are taken from medium shot. The image on the left shows a scene inside the Australian War Memorial. This image is neither a close shot that focuses on a specific object nor a long shot that fully displays the panoramic view. Instead, a balanced medium shot is chosen to maintain an objective distance between the viewer and the image. The use of medium shot does not deliberately create intimacy with viewers, nor does it create far distance to create a sense of estrangement. On contrary, it allows viewers to appreciate the architectural features and understand information spread by the memorial with a neutral and rational attitude, highlighting the seriousness and objectivity of the history, which helps the memorial playing a role in educating the public and commemorating historical events. The image on the right also utilizes the medium shot which not only allows viewers to grasp the overall picture of the building from an objective distance, but also fits in with its historical status as the birthplace of the CPC. This kind of shot conveys and solemnity of history from an objective perspective, enabling viewers to feel the sacredness of the revolutionary spirits and strengthening people's understanding and admiration for the development process of the CPC.

Both Chinese and Australian website adopt the medium shot, which enables viewers to examine history from an impartial perspective. Whether it is the war memories carried by the Australian War Memorial or the revolutionary spirit spread by the Site of the 1st CPC National Congress, viewers can deeply understand the gravity and sanctity of history through the selection of medium shot. This shared visual choice highlights that, within cross-cultural contexts, both Chinese and Australian memorial halls realized the importance of using appropriate visual means to convey their cultures. By employing the medium shot, these two memorial halls bridge the gap between history and viewers, fulfilling their missions of historical education and cultural inheritance.

4.2.3 Perspective

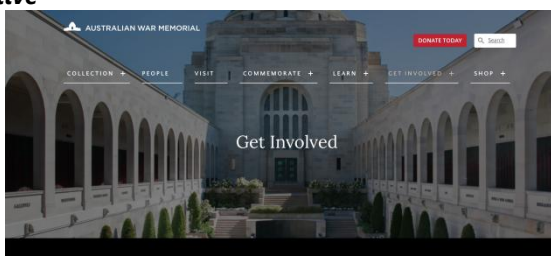


Image 4-13

The image 4-13 is photographed from eye-level angle which dissolves the common sense of authority in traditional memorial and narrows the distance between participant in the picture and viewers. In this perspective, the memorial seems to no longer be a lofty witness of history, but a narrator who engages in equal dialogue with viewers. And viewers are no longer passive recipients of information, but active participants in the historical exploration. The transition of roles perfectly echoes with the value of equality of Australian. Image 4-14 is photographed from a high angle. It depicts the overall view of the site of the Site of the 1st CPC National Congress, including the surrounding buildings and environment. This perspective symbolically conveys a core idea of the CPC that "People are the creators of history" by placing viewers in a higher visual position. When viewers look down on the architectural panorama, it seems that they look back at the development process of the Party from the high point of history. This perspective design implies that people are not only witnesses of history, but also participants and leaders of history, which is highly consistent with the guiding principle of the CPC "Put people in the first place".

Different perspectives chosen by Chinese and Australian websites reflect divergent cultural priorities in framing historical engagement. Australia's eye-level perspective visually equates the memorial hall with the viewer, mimicking a face-to-face dialogue that dissolves the authority of the war memorial. In contrast, Chinese website chooses the high angle which positions viewers above Site of the 1st CPC National Congress, giving them a higher status than the CPC. This perspective reinforces the Party's narrative that history is shaped by people, rather than isolated party, and also treats viewers as guardians tasked with sustaining this promising historical momentum. To sum up, Australia's approach democratizes historical interpretation through visual equality, whereas China's design uses elevated vantage points to underscore collective ownership and continuity in national narratives.

4.2.4 Modality

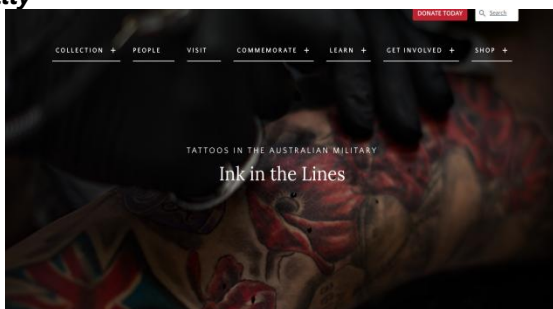


Image 4-15

Image 4-15 is a screenshot of the "exhibition" page on Australian website. This picture depicts a scene of getting a tattoo. Many members and veterans of the Australian Defence Force have tattoos, and they share a common purpose in tattooing: to remember. Their skin is engraved with their identity as veterans, memories of losses, experiences of trauma and overcoming adversity, bonds of family and friends, and recognition of the experiences that have shaped us. In this picture, there is no high color saturation and it mainly contains such colors as black, gray, and deep red, leaving an impression of solemnity and gravity. Such low modality can strip away the emotional interference of color and highlight the core purpose of tattooing: to remember. By reducing visual stimulation, viewers are forced to focus on the meaning conveyed by tattoos themselves---trauma, loss, and sacrifice. The image 4-16 is dominated by highly saturated red as the dominant hue, paired with gold title and patterns. The color red symbolizes the revolutionary spirit and struggle process, conveying the passion and original intention of building the Party; Gold highlights brilliant achievements, symbolizing the glory of the times under the guidance of great spirit of founding the Party. The combination of these two colors highlights the inheritance of the spirit and the value of the times. These colors of high saturation can capture viewers' attention, and inspire viewers' identification and resonance with the indomitable spirit of struggle. Moreover, the strong visual effect of high modality echoes the grand theme of "great spirit forges great era", highlighting the weight of history and the nobility of spirit.

The divergent use of color modality---high saturation in the Chinese web-page and low saturation in the Australian web-page---reflects distinct cultural and commemorative priorities embedded in their visual strategies. The Australian image, depicting veterans' tattoos with muted black, gray, and deep red hues, employs low saturation to emphasize the solemnity of war memory. These colors lead viewers to focus on the tattoos as tangible records of trauma, loss, and resilience. Such an aesthetic choice aligns with Australia's narrative of honoring individual experiences within historical trauma, prioritizing introspective reflection over emotional arousal. In contrast, the Chinese website employs high-saturation red and gold for a different communicative purpose: red symbolizes revolutionary passion and the Party's founding spirit, while gold reinforces themes of historical achievement and national glory. The combination of these colors is designed to evoke emotional resonance and collective pride, aligning with the memorial's role in transmitting a narrative of collective struggle and ideological inheritance. The contrast in color modality, therefore, stems from the different emphases of each memorial: Australia uses



Image 4-16

understated hues to honor personal and solemn historical memories, fostering a contemplative viewing experience, while China utilizes vibrant hues to reinforce a shared ideological legacy, aiming to inspire and unite viewers through emotional resonance. Both approaches presented for different purposes: these two websites adapt the saturation of color to their cultural contexts, ensuring that visual symbols can serve the memorial's commemorative and educational goals whether through introspective solemnity or inspirational celebration.

4.3 Comparative analysis on compositional meaning

4.3.1 Information value

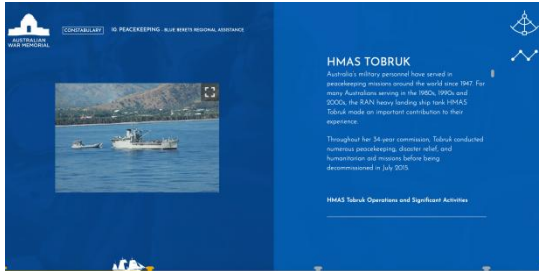


Image 4-17



Image 4-18

In Image 4-17, the picture on the left serves as a visual symbol that can be instantly captured by viewers. This intuitive visual presentation is the first step towards understanding, and its formal intuitiveness makes it the initial carrier of information transmission, thus belonging to "given information". The text on the right provides a detailed explanation of the object being displayed in the image (a warship), such as historical events and details of its mission which can only be further understood by viewers after receiving visual information from the image. Therefore, the text belongs to "new information". In a word, this picture presents the information value of left and right, forming an information transmission chain from intuitive perception to deep interpretation.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the elements placed on the top are usually represented as Ideal or General while the elements placed on the bottom as Real or Specific. In the screenshot from Chinese website, the image occupies the upper position, intuitively conveying the core content of the exhibition. The following is a detailed textual description, allowing viewers to further obtain more detailed information about the exhibition hall after understanding its theme. Thus, the image can be regarded as Ideal or General and the text as Real or Specific. What's more, the text element plays a leading role here and the image a subservient role. This web-page is strictly laid out according to the information value of compositional meaning, allowing viewers to first grasp the essence of the exhibition spirit, and then understand the specific exhibition details. This layout not only highlights key points but also improves the clarity and professionalism information communication.

Vertical (image above text) layout in the Chinese web-page and horizontal (image alongside text) layout in the Australian web-page embody distinct strategies for organizing visual and textual information. In the Chinese example, placing the image in the upper position aligns with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) concept of "Ideal or General" elements occupying superior spatial positions: the image serves as a symbolic anchor, immediately conveying the exhibition's core theme, while the text below provides "Real or Specific" details (e.g., event histories, mission details). This vertical hierarchy prioritizes thematic clarity, guiding viewers from a broad conceptual understanding to specific information---a structure that reinforces China's communicative emphasis on presenting overarching narratives first, followed by supporting details. In Australian case, the horizontal left-right arrangement follows the "given-new" information flow: the left-image acts as "given information" (intuitive visual cues like warships), while the right-text functions as "new information" (detailed explanations of historical contexts). This layout creates a linear progression from visual recognition to textual interpretation. The divergence in layout reflects differing cultural and communicative priorities: China uses vertical spatial logic to emphasize thematic primacy and hierarchical structure, suitable for conveying grand historical narratives and ideological themes; Australia employs horizontal alignment to facilitate a step-by-step explanatory process, aligning with its focus on individual stories or detailed historical documentation. Both designs are purposeful applications of visual grammar: they adapt spatial arrangements to their communicative goals, ensuring that information is structured to either reinforce overarching themes or guide viewers through an order of discovery.

4.3.2 Salience

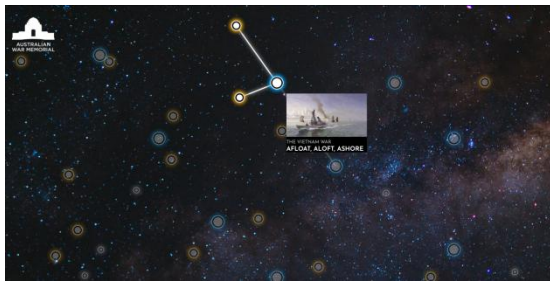


Image 4-19

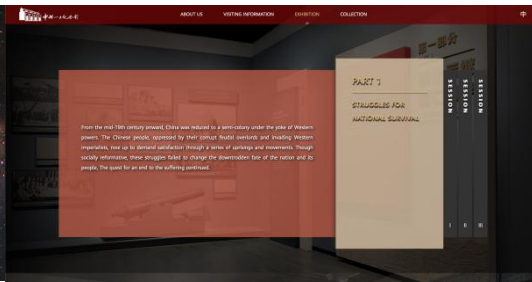


Image 4-20

The image on the left is a visual design screenshot of the online exhibition at the Australian website. In the picture, celestial bodies symbolizing significant historical nodes are marked with colors of high saturation (such as blue and yellow) to form visual focuses; Minor events are presented by smaller stars. These stars are connected by luminous lines, representing the connections between historical events. The tension between the dark background and bright celestial bodies forces the viewer's gaze to anchor key symbols first, while the intervention of lines guides the viewer to explore the implicit logical relation between events. This design depicts historical events as stars with alternating brightness and darkness, not only retaining the solemnity of war narratives but also dispelling the oppressive feeling of traditional commemorative ceremonies. The salience of image 4-20 arises from the light-dark contrast and hierarchical text-image composition. The background channels viewers' attention toward the foreground by diminishing its color saturation and brightness. Text elements are situated in red and orange blocks. The enlarged, bolded headline and the description on white font present a striking contrast against the dim background to create visual focuses. This design utilizes the human's visual sensitivity to difference of luminance to attract viewers' attention, showcasing how visual grammar manipulates biological perception to demonstrate key information.

Although the images on these two websites use different visual techniques, they share a common strategy: using the contrast between brightness and darkness to attract viewers' attention, which stems from human's natural sensitivity to visual differences. In the Australian web-page, bright celestial bodies form visual anchors on a dim background, symbolizing the importance of key historical nodes, while lines guide the exploration of event associations; The Chinese web-page weakens the the color saturation of background, making red and orange text blocks and bold titles the prominent focus. This common strategy reflects the consensus of memorial halls in digital communication: no matter what cultural message they are intended to convey, organizing information through human instinctive reactions to visual contrast is a universal method to make historical stories more perceptible and memorable, ultimately ensuring the effective transmission and profound preservation of commemorative significance.

4.3.3 Framing



Image 4-21



Image 4-22

Image 4-21 is a part of the Australian official website homepage, with text above and a map below, making it convenient for viewers to find the location of the memorial hall. There is rectangular frame line at the edge of this map to separate it from the background, but the line is too thin to provide sufficient contrast against the dark backdrop, diminishing the map's prominence as a key orientation guide. It is suggested that designers should make framing line bolder or create a clear color contrast between the map and background to present visual focus, so that viewers can read the guide information more clearly and obtain a better using experience. In image 4-22, the left portion of the composition showcases the route to the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China, and the text on the right is placed in a brown background. It is obvious that there is great color contrast between the two sides, which creates a framing line to separate them from each other.

The official websites of Chinese and Australian memorials exhibit notable differences in information-separating strategies: the Australian web-page uses explicit framing lines (rectangular borders around the map) to divide information regions, while the Chinese case forms implicit dividing lines through color contrast (the contrast between white and brown). This divergence essentially reflects different applications of the "framing" in visual grammar: Australia's framing lines are direct visual demarcations, aiming to clearly separate the map from the background via physical boundaries, yet the thin lines weaken their effectiveness due to insufficient contrast; China's color contrast naturally creates separation through differences in background

hues, avoiding overtly mechanical divisions. Behind this strategic difference lies a focus on distinct priorities: Australia tends to rely on the functional framing of lines to reinforce information hierarchy, prioritizing clarity for viewing. In contrast, China excels at using the symbolic power of color contrast to achieve dual goals: separating information modules while enhancing atmospheric cohesion. Both approaches adhere to the fundamental principle of visual grammar---establishing boundaries through visual differences---but employ distinct means: the former relies on explicit formal definitions, the latter on implicit color logic. These choices ultimately serve their respective communication objectives: Australia emphasizes practical-oriented clear guidance, while China prioritizes narrative-oriented visual harmony, ensuring their online representations align with cultural and commemorative purposes.

5. Conclusion

This study utilizes Kress & van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar to analyze the English-version web images of the Memorial Hall of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the Australian War Memorial, uncovering significant cross-cultural differences in visual symbols shaped by their cultural contexts. Major findings are as follows. Firstly, in representational meaning, the Chinese web-pages prioritize transactional reaction processes and symbolic processes, creating direct ideological connections. In contrast, the Australian website favors non-transactional reactions and classificational processes, emphasizing individual interpretation and factual clarity. These differences reflect China's focus on collective historical narratives and Australia's emphasis on personal and factual engagement with war memory. A notable finding here is the absence of analytical processes in both memorial websites. Unlike classificational or symbolic processes, analytical processes were not observed in web-pages of the two memorials, suggesting that memorial websites may prioritize thematic symbolism or categorical organization over visual representations of part-whole relationships when conveying historical meaning. Secondly, regarding interactive meaning, the Chinese website uses visual elements of high-modality and medium shots to evoke emotional resonance and solemnity, while adopting high-angle perspectives to symbolize viewers' role as inheritors of historical responsibility. Australia, conversely, employs low-modality colors and eye-level angles to foster introspective reflection, with medium shots maintaining a neutral, observational distance. These choices reflect China's cultural emphasis on symbolic depth and layered meaning in visual communication, contrasting with Australia's focus on direct, egalitarian historical dialogue that prioritizes accessibility and straightforward engagement. Thirdly, in compositional meaning, the Chinese website utilizes vertical layouts to structure information as "Ideal/General" (thematic visuals) followed by "Real/Specific" (detailed text), reinforcing hierarchical narrative flow. It also relies on implicit framing through color contrast to enhance visual harmony. Australia opts for horizontal "given-new" layouts to guide linear information processing, paired with explicit framing lines (e.g., map borders) for functional clarity. These designs reflect China's preference for thematic primacy and Australia's focus on step-by-step explanatory logic.

Theoretically, this study extends the application of visual grammar to the analysis of cross-cultural memorial websites, revealing how visual symbols construct divergent historical narratives. Practically, it offers memorial designers evidence-based insights for aligning visual strategies with cultural communication goals. However, this study has several limitations: the sample is limited to only two memorial websites, the number of images analyzed is modest (22 in total), and the analysis focuses solely on static visuals, excluding dynamic multimedia elements. Future research should expand the sample to include more cultural institutions across diverse contexts, incorporate multimodal analysis of motion and interactive features, and examine how linguistic and visual elements jointly construct meaning on multilingual platforms.

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