Structures of Representational Metafunctions of the "Cheng Beng" Ceremony in Pematangsiantar: A Multimodal Analysis

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This research discusses structures of representational metafunctions in the Chinese cultural ceremony known as Cheng Beng. The visual multimodal components were the primary focus since the culture of the Cheng Beng ceremony was dominated by visual aspects showing the process of conducting the ceremony. The methodology used in this research was the descriptive qualitative approach. The visual data sources were obtained from four phases in conducting Cheng Beng, with twenty-five pictures for every metafunction of visual communication. After applying the analysis to the data, the researcher found that structures of representational multimodal metafunctions used in the Cheng Beng ceremony in Pematangsiantar applied: the actional process (actor and goal) and reactional process (reactor and phenomenon) with the circumstances (locative and means).

Introduction

Language and culture are interconnected with one another. Wardhaugh (2002) presents different views of scholars engaged in researching the subject. The major sets of ideas are: language determines thought and culture, language influences thought and culture, culture influences people's language, language and culture influence each other and language and culture are not related to each other. Sapir (1929:207) as cited in Wardhaugh (2006:222) acknowledged the close relationship between language and culture. He stated:

"Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood……. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. . . . We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation."

This explanation from Sapir explains that language habits from one community influence the culture. It is obligatory for every community to organise and conserve the culture in order to maintain the existence of it. From the explanations and definitions above, we can infer that language cannot stand alone in human lives without the existence of culture.

Cheng Beng (known as *Qing Ming* or Tomb-Sweeping Day) is one of the most important traditional ceremonies for the Chinese to conduct, because its purpose is to honour the ancestors. It is also undertaken as a pilgrimage for the younger generation every year. Although the *Cheng Beng* ceremony is conducted each year, many people, particularly the young, do not understand the meaning of the structure of the ceremony, how to carry it out and the artefacts required to do so. The researcher himself has noted instances where parents or other elders have asked the younger generation to conduct the ceremony with insufficient knowledge of the structure. His peers confirmed similar experiences, which is problematic as the *Cheng Beng* ceremony is considered an important cultural process which must be maintained. As Wardhaugh (2006:221) stated, culture, therefore, is the 'know-how' that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living; only for a few does it require a knowledge of some, or much, music, literature, and the arts. The phrase 'know-how' is the key point that every person must possess and conserve the culture based on their ethnicity, in order to get through the task of their daily living. The cultural ceremonies culture should be carried out not only to satisfy the older generation but to conserve and keep the cultural processes in existence for future generations. People within the culture must display knowledge and understanding of such ceremonies as life tasks.

The younger generation of Indonesia must be aware that *Cheng Beng* is a very important cultural aspect that should be preserved. Koentjaraningrat (1990:15) states that the culture of one nation exists in three elements: 1) the complexity of ideas, values, names and rules 2) the complexity of human patterned-behavioural activity in the society and, 3) objects as products. These three elements occur in the *Cheng Beng* festival. *Cheng Beng* has value, a name and rules. The language used in *Cheng Beng* is in the form of interaction between family and relatives. It can also be in the form of praying to the ancestors through pilgrimage, combined with various symbols and offerings such as clothes, foods, ghost money (*ginpo*), candles and incense. Every symbol and object has its own meaning which can be seen through aspects such as colour, size, form and position. The language and object are the verbal and visual mode in the tradition. O'Halloran (2006) stated that people live in a multimodal society,

which makes meaning through the co-deployment of a combination of semiotic resources which covers visual images, gestures and sounds (p. 220). Kress & van Leeuwen (in Norris, 2004) suggest that language can no longer be thought of as the primary mode of communication and that other semiotics have to be taken into account when analysing communication. In analysing the language, text of language should be combined with semiotic resources, such as images, gestures and sounds, in multimodal texts. This supports Halliday's statement (1978) that there are many other modes of meaning in any culture which are outside the realm of language (p.4). Based on these explanations and theories (O'Halloran, Halliday and Kress and van Leeuwen), it is clear that verbal and visual modes play a very important part in multimodal analysis. The multimodal analysis was conducted using the tradition of the *Cheng Beng* festival as one of the important Chinese cultural aspects in Indonesia. The research was carried out in Pematangsiantar city because of the number of Chinese people there who participate in the ceremony in public cemeteries each year. The researcher analysed the structure and process of the ceremony due to the lack of knowledge displayed by the younger generation. Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted research entitled, "Structures of Representational Metafunction of the *Cheng Beng* Ceremony in Pematangsiantar: A Multimodal Analysis."

Theoretical Framework
Multimodal Analysis

Hu and Luo (2016:32) state that multimodal analysis is a relatively new subject for social semiotic research. Feng, Zhang, & O'Halloran (2014) summarised five perspectives of multimodal analysis, they are: social semiotic analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), (van Leeuwen, 2005), systemic functional analysis (Baldry & Thibault, 2006), social interaction (Norris, 2004), multimodal metaphor analysis (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009) and multimodal textual analysis from the perspective of corpus linguistics (Gu, 2006) (cited in Feng, Zhang &O'Halloran, 2014, p. 89).

Baldry and Thibault (2006: 21) explain that multimodality refers to the diverse ways in which a number of distinct semiotic resource systems are both code-played and co-contextualised in making specific meaning of a text. Baldry and Thibault (2006:20) also suggest that multimodal texts combine and integrate the meaning – making resources of various semiotic modalities – language, gesture, movement, visual images, sound, and so on – to produce text-specific meanings. A critical aspect of multimodal textual analysis is intertextuality (Lemke, 1985; Thibault, 1986, 1990), where no text is made or interpreted in isolation from other texts. Instead, texts of all kinds are always related to other texts, at the same time, they incorporate other texts and other textual voices into their own internal organisation. Intertextuality is a system of relations that link texts on the basis of shared criteria of meaning, formal patterning and shared principles of organisation. According to Kress & van

Leeuwen, 1996 in Baldry and Thibault, 2006), various visual elements in the text are modalised to indicate attitude and evaluative stances; visual elements can be modalised just as much as linguistic elements. Halliday (1985:101) says that visual images as a form of non-verbal communication can be studied and understood in similar ways to language and can be analysed using grammatical texts. Visual literacy may be approached through the study of how visual images represent patterns of experience.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:15) therefore state that any communication simultaneously fulfils three functions, or metafunctions of visual communication, they are: 1) Ideational or Representational, which the 'grammar of visual design' makes available, hence allowing the experience to be coded visually. 2) Interpersonal or Interactional which the 'grammar of visual design' makes available, aiding flexibility with visual communication and with the relations between the makers and viewers of visual 'texts' which this entails. 3) Textual or Compositional which shows with the way in which representations and communicative acts cohere into meaningful wholes.

The Structures of Visual Multimodal Metafunctions

In this context, structure will be related to the word "grammar," with reference to the meaning of rules of language. Halliday (1985:101) states that grammar goes beyond formal rules of correctness. It is a means of representing patterns of experience... it enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them. But as time goes on, the theory of grammar has been widened and extended through the theory of visual grammar design. Visual 'grammar' describes the way in which depicted elements – people, places and things – combine in visual 'statements' of greater or lesser complexity and extension (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:1). Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state that the 'grammar of visual design,' like linguistic structures, uses visual structures to indicate particular interpretations of experience and forms of social interaction. To some degree these can also be expressed linguistically. Meanings belong to culture, rather than to specific semiotic modes. And the way meanings are mapped across different semiotic modes, the way some things can, for instance, be 'said' either visually or verbally, others only visually, again others only verbally, is also culturally and historically specific (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:2). When we want to express either image-form, writing or speech, of course they will be realised differently. But even when we can express what seem to be the same meanings in either image-form or writing or speech, they will be realised differently. For instance, what is expressed in language through the choice between different word classes and clause structures, may, in visual communication, be expressed through the choice between different uses of colour or different compositional structures. And this will affect meaning. Expressing something verbally or visually makes a difference.

Hence, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:15) state that any communication simultaneously fulfils three functions, or, metafunctions of visual communication, they are:

1) Ideational or Representational, which the 'grammar of visual design' makes available, and hence with the ways we can encode experience visually.

2) Interpersonal or Interactional, which the 'grammar of visual design' makes available, and hence with the things we can do to, or for, each other with visual communication, and with the relations between the makers and viewers of visual 'texts' which this entails.

3) Textual or Compositional, which is shown by the way in which representations and communicative acts cohere into meaningful wholes.
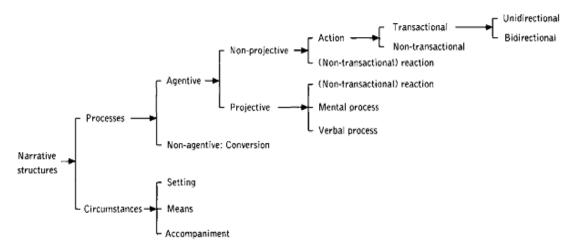
Structure of Representational Meaning

The representational or ideational metafunction refers to the way images represent or make statements about reality (Joice and Gaudin, 2007:13/2007:23). The definition above shows that representation is related to the word of "images" and the reality that being represented by images refers to whom is being represented and what is happening inside the images. Referring to the ideational function, the realisation of images can be in the form of narrative structures and conceptual structures. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:59), the narrative structures mean when participants are connected by a vector, they are represented as doing something to or for each other. Thus, where conceptual patterns represent participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning, in other words, in terms of their generalised and more or less stable and timeless essence, narrative patterns serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change and transitory spatial arrangements.

In narrative structures, there are participants, processes, and circumstances which are involved as the elements of images in order to explain something. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:57-59) emphasise that the key to understanding such texts therefore lies above all in an understanding of the visual semiotic means which are used to weld these heterogeneous elements into a coherent whole, into a text. Visual structures relate visual elements to each other; these visual elements, however, may themselves be heterogeneous – a word as a visual element, a block of written text as a visual element, an image as a visual element, a number or an equation as a visual element. Participants, processes, and circumstances are the three elements of narrative structures in images.

The relationship among the elements of narrative structures, processes and circumstances, can be summarised and illustrated in the following Figure of narrative structures in visual communication (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:74).

Figure 2.1. Structures of Representational Meaning in Visual Communication

The Relationship Between Multimodal Analysis and Cheng Beng Ceremony

Baldry and Thibault (2006:20) state that multimodal texts combine and integrate the meaning – making resources of various semiotic modalities – of language, gesture, movement, visual images, sound, and so on, to produce text-specific meanings. A critical aspect of multimodal textual analysis is intertextuality (Lemke, 1985; Thibault, 1986, 1990) so that no text is made or interpreted in isolation from other texts. Instead, texts of all kinds are always related to other texts, at the same time, they incorporate other texts and other textual voices into their own internal organisation. Intertextuality is a system of relations that link texts on the basis of shared criteria of meaning, formal patterning and shared principles of organisation. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) in Baldry and Thibault (2006), various visual elements in the text are modalised to indicate attitude and evaluative stances, while visual elements can be modalised just as much as linguistic elements. Halliday (1985:101) states that visual images as a form of non-verbal communication can be studied and understood in similar ways to language and can be analysed using grammatical texts. The visual images analysis of multimodal form has been of interest to researchers in the field in recent years, as stated by O'Halloran & Smith (2011). Domains researched include advertising, film, museums and of course linguistics (O'Halloran & Smith, 2011).

This research is aimed at exploring the multimodal approach in terms of culture. The objective is to analyse semiotic resources in order to understand their meaning potential and how they function, as well as how they can integrate with each other and how they are interpreted in a given context. The third approach to multimodality, multimodal interactional analysis, was developed by Scollon and Scollon (2003) and combines interactional

sociolinguistics, intercultural communication and multimodal semiotics. The relationship between multimodality and culture, as applied to the *Cheng Beng* ceremony, can be shown in the example of the image below, in the prayer phase.
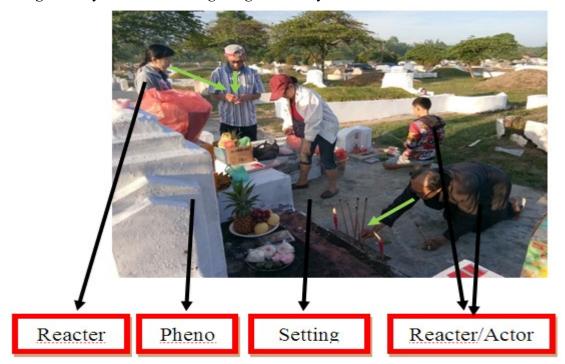
Image 1. Prayer Phase of *Cheng Beng* Ceremony

Image 1. indicates the realisation of the transactional action conducted by the participants. The action is started by lightning the candles and starting to pray to the ancestors. This action is conducted in front of the tombstones of the ancestors. The process starts with the eldest child of the family, the father as usual is the leader of the family. Then, the participant lights the incense and starts to pay respects. This process will go on to other participants until the youngest generation is reached. The narrative structure of this image is indicated through actional and reactional processes. Actional process refers more to the transactional action, since both participant and phenomenon are the symbol of the praying process. Actional process happens when the participant, as actor, performs an action, especially in presenting the offering as a transactional symbol to the ancestors; then performing a praying movement in holding the incense as the symbol to deliver or send the prayers to the ancestors, in order to protect the family and seek good luck for family health and wealth.

Social Context of the 21st Industrial Revolution 4.0 for the Cheng Beng Ceremony

According to Rojko (2017:80), Industrial Revolution 4.0 was triggered by the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Its technological basis is smart

automation of cyber-physical systems with decentralised control and advanced connectivity (IoT functionalities). It means that all aspects will be borderless with the use of computing data and unlimited data, including the social context in linguistics. There are two implications in social context: society context determines language and language determines social context. The social context in systemic functional linguistics is constituted by three elements, ideology, culture and situation (Saragih, 2012:2-3). The *Cheng Beng* ceremony, one of the aspects in the social context, may also be impacted by the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The *Cheng Beng* ceremony is always identified with the artefacts due to their importance in conducting the ceremony. The artefacts include ghost money (ginpo, wanpo, etc), which is burnt in the ceremony. The burning of ghost money is an important artefact since the Chinese people believe that the dead person in another world needs all the things that live humans in the real world do, including money. In the era of industry 4.0, which emphasises computer systems, system networks and the move to paperless administrations, the *Cheng Beng* ceremony may be impacted. In Singapore, people who conduct the *Cheng Beng* ceremony are not allowed to burn the ghost money because of global warming, and can only use candles, incense and flowers to conduct the ceremonies. In the past, people burnt the ghost money for their ancestors to use. Nowadays, ghost money still exists, but other artefacts are included in the ceremony such as a house, car or servants. It is predicted that, in future, the *Cheng Beng* ceremony will alter, as there will be no graves and no burning of ghost money due to the paperless society. In Taiwan, these innovations have already been adapted. The dead one was burned and the ashes were wrapped in paper and buried in the ground. Family members were not allowed to pay respects by burning all the artefacts previously used in the ceremony, giving offerings, and buying a new coffin to be put in a grave. Since the industry 4.0, there may be no need to use the old ways, because the technology can replace the absence of the dead via video calls or other technological advances.

Research Methodology
Research Design

The methodology used for this research is the descriptive qualitative approach. In this research, all equipment (artefacts) meanings are mentioned and described along with the *Cheng Beng* ceremonial visual meanings. A qualitative approach is used to describe the data. One of the characteristics of the qualitative method is to see the process we have to deal with according to the setting; the place where the research will be carried out. (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998:4-7) have theorised five characteristics of qualitative research: 1) Naturalistic, qualitative research has actual 'setting' functions as the data source and the analyst is the main instrument, 2) Descriptive in nature, the data collected takes the form of words or pictures, 3) Concerned with process; the process is more important than the result, 4) The data is analysed inductively, and 5) 'The meaning' is the main focus.

After collecting the visual data, elements are classified, categorised, interpreted and analysed through the system of metafunction developed by Halliday (2004) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). The meanings of communication are unfolded through ideational, interpersonal and textual functions which cover the narrative and conceptual structures, interactive meanings through the systems of contact, social distance and attitude, modality markers. The informational systems such as value, salience and framing are used to see the realisation of characteristics of the visual components.

Subject and Object of the Research

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998:106), data refers to the rough materials collected from the world to be studied, including interview transcripts, observation field notes, diaries, photographs, official documents and newspaper articles. Data can be taken from the subject and object of the research. The subject of the research is the family of Liongtjin Samsudin, in Rambung Merah public cemeteries. The other subject of this research is a cemetery keeper of the place where the *Cheng Beng* ceremony is conducted. Here, the researcher conducted an interview with the subject in order to gain more information about the meaning of artefacts and the phases of the *Cheng Beng* ceremony. The object of the research is to analyse and interpret the visual images from every phase of conducting the *Cheng Beng* ceremony: preliminary phase, prayer phase, burning of libation phase and closing phase. Every phase contains some images, including the artefacts (equipment) from the procedures of conducting the *Cheng Beng* ceremony.

Research Finding

After conducting the analysis of the data above, the researcher found that the structures of representational multimodal metafunctions used in the *Cheng Beng* ceremony in Pematangsiantar are actional processes (actor and goal) and reactional processes (reactor and phenomenon) with the circumstances (locative and means)

The detail structures can be seen in the following figure 4.1

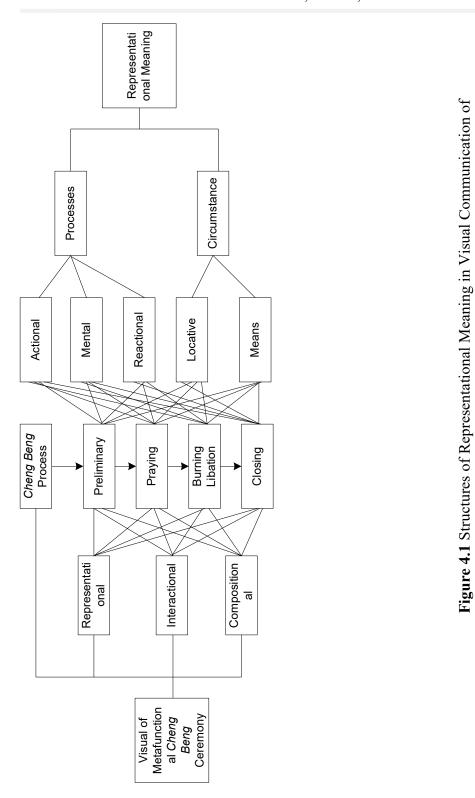**Figure 4.1** Structures of Representational Meaning in Visual Communication of *Cheng Beng* ceremony

Figure 4.1 above shows the structure of representational meaning from visual multimodal metafunctions used in the *Cheng Beng* ceremony in Pematangsiantar which covers actional process (actor and goal) and reactional process (reactor and phenomenon) with the

circumstances (locative and means). From the figure, it is clear that every process of *Cheng Beng* from preliminary, praying, burning libation to the closing can be found in the images. There are twelve images that show the structure of representational meaning. For instance, in image 4.4, there are narrative structures depicted in the process of the prayer phase, paying respect to *Hou Tu*. The structure is the non-projective transactional process where there are reactional and actional processes in the phase. The participant in the image is constructed as actor and at the same time as reactor because of the vector formed by an eyeline. The *Hou Tu* tombstone which the eyeline goes to is called a phenomenon. The reactor looks to the phenomenon and performs heartfelt praying to welcome *Hou Tu* to consume and enjoy the offering. The circumstances involved in this image are those of locative and means. The locative circumstance is shown by the grave, fruits, cake/cookies, drink and ghost money. The incense and candles are the circumstance of means in the process of praying the *Hou Tu*.

Conclusion

With reference to the data analyses in the previous chapter, chapter IV, the researcher concludes that the structures of representational metafunctions used in the *Cheng Beng* ceremony in Pematangsiantar depend on the visual metafunctions used in the images. There are three visual metafunctional meanings proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006): ideational or representational meaning, interpersonal or interactional meaning, and textual or compositional meaning. Representational, the structural approach discussed in this research, demonstrates actional process (actor and goal) and reactional process (reactor and phenomenon) with the circumstances (locative and means) in the *Cheng Beng* Ceremony.

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