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ARTICLE

Mediating the Politics of Modern Identity through English Use in Chinese Technology Advertising

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ABSTRACT

Across a large number of countries, the use of English in non-English-language advertising is often conceived as a powerful tool for constructing identities. This article aims to examine the politics of modern identity in China as constructed and normalized in Chinese-English bilingual advertising for autos in newspapers and magazines. Drawing upon a critical-cognitive approach as the result of combining critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics, the article focuses mainly on the examination into the social, cultural, and political meanings of modern identity, as well as how they are enacted, shaped, reinforced and legitimated through the ideology-governed application of English. The roles English may play in the constructive processes were found often complicated and fluid, which seems to be closely associated with the paradoxical attitudes and beliefs of the country towards English as a foreign language in China. The examination of modern identity politics as a discursive construction in Chinese-English auto ads has not only exemplified the social, cultural, and political meanings of modern identity in China, but has also demonstrated how the local politics of English is manifested in, and becomes an intrinsic element of, the discourse of modern identity there.

Keywords: Chinese Advertising; English; Modern Identity; Politics; Technology

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1. Introduction

In its focus on the politics of modern identity in mainland China (hereafter China), this article concerns itself with analysis within the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) of how the local politics of English is at work throughout the construction of modern identity in technology advertising of China, a country in the Expanding Circle where English is conventionally considered as a foreign language [1] and therefore not the default language. Specifically, the goal of this article is to unpack the social, cultural, and political meanings of modern identity, as well as to explore how they are enacted, shaped, reinforced and legitimated through the ideology-governed application of English in Chinese technology advertising in China. Like Jamie Lee [2], modern identity here is used as an inclusive term covering all possible forms or varieties of modernity shaped by distinct cultural heritages and sociopolitical conditions [3–5]. By this, the article assumes that the ways in which a particular configuration of modern identity is produced or "performed" [6, 7] through the medium of English are, consciously or not, structured or determined by the localized English ideologies.

Emphatically, this synchronic rather than diachronic study only investigates the politics of modern identity in China at a specific point of time of Beijing Olympics which is significant to China in its history. At that time Chinese nationalism reached an unparalleled level, so was the popularity of English there. In analysis, the article draws upon the cognitive linguistic approach of critical modality developed by Li [8, 9] to explore and explain the manipulative role of English and its functions at work in the cognitive processing of mental representation, bringing visibility and legitimacy to the politics of modern identity as represented and materialized in technology ads. Here it is crucial to accentuate that considering the unilateral communication of bilingual[1] advertising, we may well view the use of English as "a rational act" [10, 11] by advertisers to manipulate the conceptual processing of information. One compelling reason for this is concerned with the dual intent of English mixing: on the other hand, English is used to activate meanings relating exclusively to this language and, on the other, it is used to suppress its counterpart of the local language at least "within a limited context" [12] of messages where English words are mixed. Besides, scholars from diverse fields have already come to the consensus on the interconnection between mental representation and manipulation [13–16]. By providing an explanatory account of how English is mobilized and harnessed to manipulate the mental representation of modern identity in English-endeavored cognitive processing, the article aims at demystifying or making visible the opaque aspect of the ideology-laden English use, the politics of modern identity, and the interplay between them. In the next section, I, first of all, make a brief discussion about the treatment of English as an analytic focus for examining the politics of modern identity as likely constructed and represented in the form of Chinese-English bilingual ads.

2. English, Identity, and Advertising

Transcultural flows of English exemplify its cultural relocation, remaking and reappropriation in the current world increasingly featured with multilingualism and multiculturality, which have in fact made the English language "a language of imagined communities and refashioning identity" [17]. Based on Pennycook's [17] account, the word "refashioning" highlights both fragile and resilient aspects of the concept of "hegemony" [18]. On the one hand, English is often nativized and appropriated for local cultures and identities to be rearticulated, sustained, negotiated, or transgressed [19–25]; on the other, it is not infrequently deployed as a new or alternative resource for the construction of a community and definition of its members to stand in contrast to the sanitized image offered by hegemonic institutions [2, 26, 27]. Not only does this perception and evaluation of English as a global language bring to light the important role played by individual agency and power in influencing the uptake and application of English across the globe; it also gives prominence to the necessity to take the English language "as much a *site* as it is a *means*" for identity formation and empowerment [28, 29].

Around a large number of countries, English is often used as a powerful tool for constructing and representing different identities in non-English-language advertising [2, 27, 30–35]. Sociolinguistic research on the use of English for identity constructions in bilingual advertising, however, tends to neglect the materialized tension between the English language and the local language in the site of bilingual advertising by refusing to recognize it as a type of metalin-

guistic discourse, thus paying scant attention to the political dimension of identities resulted from the culturally situated dynamics of English use and language ideologies.

It is also important to emphasize that advertising has long before been discussed as a pervasive disseminator of social and cultural values[36–38]. Ads as a form of discourse are widely discussed in relation to its powerfulness and fruitfulness in contributing to how our identities are materially constructed[39, 40]. Through a detailed analysis of ads as promotional texts, Wernick[41] illustrates the impact of ads on cultural formation and how it has increasingly become central along with the spread of the market into every facet of social life. But advertising does not merely "mirror" social and cultural values[36]. For example, observed in current Chinese ads in China, especially those setting the Chinese X-generation as the target audience, is the increasing predominance of cultural values of modernism and individualism instead of traditionalism and collectivism[42–44]. This gives rise to the question if English, when used in Chinese advertising, shapes new values or reflects the mainstream value in the Chinese marketplace. But according to Piller's[45] observation, despite the rich literature on English mixing or usage in non-English language advertising, efforts seem to have rarely been put into either investigating possible alternative or different forms and meanings of an identity resulted from the mediating role of English-language-related ideologies, or examining cultural value and belief systems of a periphery community underpinning the constructive process, or both. This article, as noted above, is to explore and interpret the English-ideology-governed construction of modern identity in Chinese technology ads with a specific focus on its social, cultural, and political meanings.

3. English and Technology in China

Adamson[46] depicts English as "a desirable evil" to China. By this, it is meant to say that not only is English treated as a threat to national identity and cultural tradition of China; it is also a positive instrument to enhance the deeper integration of China into the global economy. The Chinese government believes firmly that the country is in need of the English language to facilitate access to culture and modern technology of the West; but it is also concerned about the possibility that western ideas and ideologies introduced into China along with the spread of English will undermine or putrefies its politics and cultural tradition. Here it is noteworthy that the Chinese government has already realized the importance to deploy, as well as invest in, the English language for the advancement of national interests. This shift seems particularly evident in the 2003 official English language curriculum for senior secondary schools. As Wang[47] points out, in this curriculum a "humanistic" goal is added to the longstanding "instrumental" rationale, so that the traditional aims of English education have been enriched. Apart from language policies, the domestic force of English language media, according to Simpson[48], equally plays a role in undermining the perception of English as a vehicle of cultural imperialism too.

At the individual level, like in many other countries in the Outer and Expanding Circles, English symbols modernity and globality in China and is often seen as an important linguistic capital that Chinese people also invest in[49]. As it is well addressed by other scholars[31, 50], the appearance of English words in Chinese advertising is also motivated by, or related to, the predominant view of English in China as the symbol of cosmopolitanism, high quality, innovation, fashion, internationalism, and sophistication. Emphatically, we cannot take the complexity of English language ideologies as existing independently, but instead as elements comprising the holistic conceptualization of the English language in China. Such social, cultural, and political particularities of the English language in China cogently suggest taking this language, when used in Chinese advertising, as a site as well as a means for identity definition and contestation, thus bringing to the fore the argument for attention to be given to the sociocultural and political dimensions of modern identity. This particular sociocultural and politics context of China in which English is used also presumably suggests any linguistic research into English-related identity constructions in Chinese advertising has to be firmly grounded in an interdisciplinary approach, as well as usage-based, descriptive data.

On the other hand, China has a long history in the pursuit of modern technology from the West, which is attributed to the country's belief that scientific and technological development is vital for bolstering national security and national power[51]. The pursuit of high technology reached an unprecedented level in the context of Deng Xiaoping's reforms,

one of the essential components of which is to utilize science and technology to modernize China and to provide the country with the means of self-determination. Yet, since the 21st century the Chinese government has been intervening to reduce the reliance on others by promoting technological development through a series of central government initiatives, such as the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Science and Technology Development (2006–2020), the Internet Plus initiative, and, the latest, the Made in China 2025. The significance of self-reliance in the promotion of indigenous innovation and technological development has been habitually reiterated and underscored. For example, Hu Jintao, the previous Chinese President, has the following statement when delivering a speech at the 2006 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, as reported by Xinhuanet [52]:

> The development of China will largely depend on self and hard work of Chinese people. At the same time, China will stick to the fundamental policy of opening to the world and implement the opening up strategy based on mutual benefit and a win-win situation.

Hu clearly emphasized the importance to be fully aware of the dialectic relationship between independence and introduction of high technology abroad. Notably here is the adoption in the national discourses of China of a dichotomy between indigenous learning as the essence and a pragmatic, utilitarian or instrumental benefit accruing from foreign, modern technology. As remarked by Dai [53], the integration between indigenous traditions and modern attributes is proved especially fruitful in China. In this article, what is at stake is not a straightforward dialectic but precisely the ways in which the opposing imperatives are linked with one another and how the apparent tension between them might be, surprisingly or not, employed as a resource for the narrative of modern identity in mass media, in this case Chinese-English bilingual advertising.

4. Methodology

The data on which this study is based came from auto ads in China with English mixing. Being widely recognized as a representative example of modern technology that is increasingly central "to social life across the period of modernity" [54], the technological product of auto lends itself well to the description of auto ads as an excellent site for this study of modern identity and its social, cultural, and political meanings. This study, as noted earlier, is a synchronic study of English-related identity constructions in Chinese advertising at a specific point of time of the Beijing Olympics when Olympics-related Chinese nationalism and English seemed to have reached a new phase of extreme popularity in China. A total of 40 English-mixed print ads for cars, SUVs, MPVs and roadsters were collected from the magazine *Auto Fan* and the newspapers *Beijing Evening News*, *Guangzhou Daily*, *Ningbo Evening News,* and *Southeast Business News* circulated in China during 2007, just one year before the Beijing Olympics. Aside from the varying degrees of advertising values, the newspapers, in contrast to the magazine with a relatively stable readership, target as widest range of potential readers as possible.

Observed from the data are twenty-nine ads for car, eight for SUV, two for roadster, and only one for MPV, which reflects faithfully the sharp difference between them in market share in China (see http://data.auto.sina.com.cn/xlsjk/). Out of these products, there are nine different brands in total, all of which but two are foreign. The headline and the slogan are the structural domains where the frequency of English mixing was found highest either in the form of intrasentential mixing, or intersentential mixing [55], or monolingual English, or bilingual parallel. The last one refers to the case of partial or entire co-presence of the two languages, one is the target language, and the other the source language. Guided by these quantitative findings, the bulk of analysis below concentrates on the ads for foreign-branded cars and SUVs for an interpretive account of English use and its holistic ideologies in mediating the politics of modern identity in China.

Situated within the theoretical framework of CDA, this article, as noted earlier, aims at examining the politics of modern identity in China and to demystify how the sociocultural and politic meanings of modern identity are enacted, shaped, reinforced, and legitimized in Chinese auto advertising discourse through the mediation of English- language-related ideologies there. Given the multimodal feature of ads, modern identity constructed in relation to English is not simply the consequence of interactions between English and the local language, but involving their interactions with

other semiotic resources like picture, color, and page layout. This certainly poses the analytic challenge to provide an explanatory investigation into the possible role English plays in the construction of modern identity and possible connection to its local politics. To conduct a multimodal analysis that is interpretive and explanatory best aligning with the aim of CDA to unveil these opaque aspects, this article draws upon the cognitive linguistic approach of critical multimodality developed by Li[8, 9] for examining the construction of identities in the site of multimodal ads mixed with English words. Given the objective of this article, a detailed introduction of this approach is not provided here. Suffice it to say that, combining the intertextual approach in CDA and the cognitive theories of frames[56, 57], mental spaces[58], and conceptual blending[59], this analytical approach, compared with other cognitive linguistic approaches of (M)CDA[60–63],[2] is proved more feasible and productive not only in catching the varying degrees of the contribution of the English language to identity constructions, but also in unravelling political dimensions of identities and the language. Of equal importance, this approach may be, to the greatest extent, immune to both accusations of the imposition of CDA analysts' interpretation with little or no explanation[64–66] and of its failure to investigate how meaning and identity are constructed in multimodal texts[67, 68].

In the analysis I will probe both the themes and ideological dimensions of modern identity, and tensions in English-based endeavors to shape, reinforce, and legitimize them in the constructive processes. As noted earlier, the analytical focus is on how English is mobilized for manipulating the mental representation of modern identity. My analysis as follows usually starts with the headline and slogan mixed with English words, the English words of which are separated from other recognizable language entities in different structures and with varying extents of manifestation. To provide an evident-based explanatory account of English-language-related identity constructions, it is important to clarify English-promoted conceptual elements and articulate their conceptualization, which is followed a systematic description of the mental representation of modern identity in relation to English-prompted conceptual elements.

5. Findings: Two Themes and Three Ideological Dimensions

The data at hand privilege the orientation of Chinese people towards success and emotions, two most visible themes of modern identity. Many headlines and slogans choose such English words "success" , "victory" , "win" , "excitement" , "passion" , "happiness" , and "surprise" for the presentation of their core meaning:

Victory In Pajero, 成功源于帕杰罗 *chenggong yuanyu pajielu*
(*lit*. Success comes from Pajero) <*Mitsubishi Motors*>
灵动 · 欲达则达 *lingdong · yudazeda* (*lit*. Lingdong can go to anyplace at any time), Dynamic storm, Win whenever you want <*Mitsubishi Motors*>
Big Pleasure <Mitsubishi Motors>
Sheer Driving Pleasure <BMW>
The Power to Surprise <Kia>
Excitement Guaranteed <Mini Cooper>
Happiness from Accent <Hyundai> [3]

Nevertheless, in most cases success orientation constructed for ascription and claiming is often accomplished through the connection of products to the state of "achievement" , or the instant "alternation" of a situation resulted in a new state[69], as suggested by the following English-only headlines and slogans:

Fascination Accelerates <Honda>
Get a new view <Honda>
Go beyond <Land Rover>
SHIFT_convention <Nissan>

In the light of cognitive semantics[70], the verbs "accelerate" , "get" , "go" and "shift" , the adjective "new" , and the adverb "beyond" all indicate a counterfactual scenario evoked in an integration network comprising mental spaces

across which is the web of connections. By way of example, *go* could imply the counterfactual scenario of "come". This kind of conspicuous contrast is certainly powerful in orienting the viewers towards success to be finally emerged in the blend. For an illustration, let us look at the ad for *Honda CR-V* with its worldwide slogan "The power of dreams" (see **Figure 1**). Its headline comprises the primary one "Get a New View!" in English, below which are "略高一筹" *luegao yichou* (*lit.* a bit higher) and "全新境界" *quanxin jingjie* (*lit.* a completely new view) in the smaller font size, and the secondary one "梦想提前实现" *mengxiang tiqian shixian* (*lit.* the dream realized ahead of schedule).



Figure 1. The ad for *Honda* CR-V from *Ningbo Evening News.*

The representation of success orientation here is mainly achieved by means of altering the old or previous view of driving into an entirely new, different view as well as through the acquisition of this new view. Specifically, the English word *Get* as used is particularly helpful to emphasize the instant or moment of getting hold of a new view; besides, it indicates success in doing so, which seems more significant to the orientation toward success. These nuances, too, point explicitly to the blend. The significance of *Get* also lies in the connection of this conceptual element it makes with the Chinese verb "实现" *shixian* (*lit*. realize; get) observed in the secondary headline declaring that dreams can be come into realization beforehand. Of equal importance, along with *New*, *Get* considerably signals the new view at issue as a specific object of this so-alleged dream. Since the promoted product is a SUV, we can go further to connect this new view to the act of driving. Thus discussed, a DRIVING space is triggered by *Get a New View*, within which drivers who are eager to get a new view now make it effortlessly. Importantly, *new* is opposite to "old", which means the counterfactual scenario of *Get a New View* is particularly relevant for us to interpret how the viewers are oriented toward success, when contrasted with drivers of other cars with this dream fail to get a new view. As presented in **Figure 2**[4], a Disanalogy mapping between these two spaces occurs, and thereby generated within the local blended space is a sense of being successful due to a new view brought about by this SUV.

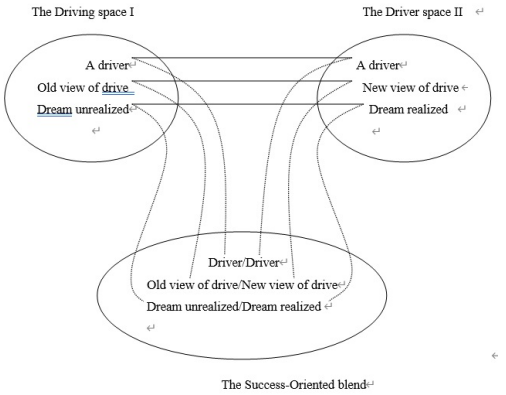


Figure 2. A simplified network diagram of the Success-Oriented blend in Honda ad.

Notably, the vehicle being promoted is particular in that it has an amazing power. Given the symbolic association of the English language with modern technology in China's context, the English slogan "The power of dreams", which declares "the power that is dream-oriented", is, in fact, not restricted to the depiction of power as the source of dreams. Thus, the conceptual elements contained within the local blended space, as shown in **Figure 3** as one input to the left, include drivers and their realized dream. Chosen as another input space in this network diagram, the HONDA CR-V frame structures two conceptual elements of importance: Honda CR-V and Honda CR-V being the source of dreams. **Figure 3** illustrates how the conceptual elements structured by these two inputs respectively can become four counterparts across the spaces and, finally, are fused in the final blend. Inferably, the amazing power of the product becomes the direct cause to a new view. Differently stated, the amazing power makes a new view possible, whereby the significance of the English slogan in orienting Chinese people toward success becomes palpable.

In what follows, I proceed to address the politics of modern identity as enacted, shaped, reinforced and normalized through the ideology-loaded use of English. They in-

clude high technology that is defined as an important means, self-reliance, delimited as the crucial condition, and success, ascribed to personal efforts and perseverance.

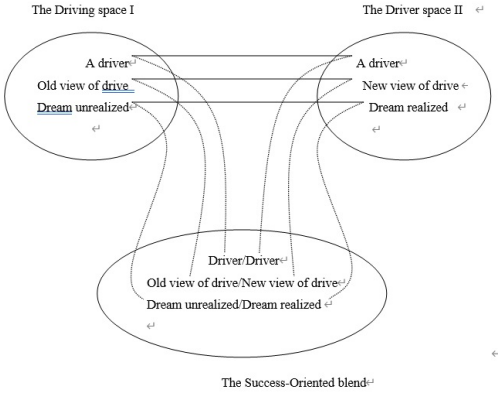


Figure 3. A simplified network diagram of the *Honda* blend.

5.1. High Technology as an Important Means

The earlier analysis of the ad for *Honda CR-V* must have already, to varying degrees, illustrated how modern technology is deployed as an essential tool or means for getting a new view, thus elevated to be an essential part of ideologies manipulating the discursive construction of success orientation. The *Hyundai Veracruz* ad then provides another good case in point for illustrating this ideology of modern technology. Within this ad are mixed with the English verbal phrase "Drive your way" as its slogan and the English abbreviations "GPS", "CD", "DVD", etc. observed from the body copy, as reproduced in **Figure 4**.



Figure 4. The ad for *Hyundai Veracruz* from *Beijing Evening News.*

The English slogan as presented in declarative in mood plainly assumes driving as you like, which cogently indicates the emotions of enjoyment and pleasure caused by the promoted SUV. The second-person pronoun in its possessive form is then utilized to project potential consumers of Chinese people into a DRIVING space structuring "you" as the driver in addition to the emotional rewards of enjoyment and pleasure related to driving the promoted SUV. Announcing a brand-new Veracruz equipped with a navigation unit, the headline "维拉克斯豪华导航版全新上市" *Weilakesi haohua daohang ban quanxin shangshi* (*lit.* the brand-new luxury navigation-installed Veracruz coming in) evokes the VERACRUZ space containing the core element of the GPS navigator, as specified by the phrase "维拉克斯搭载全新专用 GPS 导航系统" *Weilakesi dazai quanxin zhuanyong GPS daohang xitong* (*lit.* The Veracruz is equipped with a brand-new GPS navigation system). The term GPS on its own elicits the GPS frame containing its distinctive functions in directing the road and locating positions as the generic element.

As diagrammed in **Figure 5**, we can choose the GPS frame, the DRIVING space, and VERACRUZ space as the inputs. The shared element of vehicles maps the VERACRUZ space with the DRIVING space.[5] Generated within the blend of them develops some new inferences depicting that "you" as the driver love driving with this SUV, whereby the cause-result relationship between the product and enjoyment and pleasure emerges. Given the association of the GPS frame with the VERACRUZ space, the high-tech product of GPS is highlighted in the blend as a specific tool or means necessary to the orientation of Chinese people toward VERACRUZ-caused enjoyment and pleasure. What is apparent is the direct impact of the GPS frame on the generation of emotions in the blend, leading to the discovery of an indispensable role GPS plays in this process.

Despite being implicitly articulated, the manipulative role the installed GPS navigator plays in orientating Chinese people toward success is detectable too. As addressed in the analysis above, once the common elements structured in the GPS frame is projected into the blend, the navigator frees drivers of Veracruz from a potential concern about losing their way on road. This nuance developed from the blend is concerned more with a sense of success the navigator brings about.

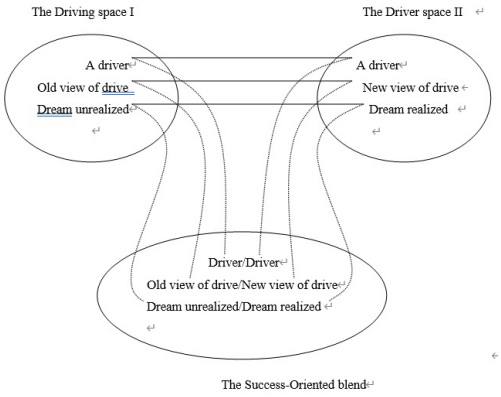


Figure 5. A simplified network diagram of the *Hyundai Veracruz* blend.

5.2. Self-Reliance as the Condition

Centering on the significant role modern technology plays in the orientation of Chinese people toward success and emotions, the foregoing analyses probably have given us an illusion that the two themes of modern identity as identified are not social or political in nature. Instead, the construction of these orientations is nurtured in large measure by the hierarchy of values and intellectual concepts as well as their cultural background of China. Despite the intertwinement of modern technology with success and emotions, observed from the data at hand is no sign that the former must be treated as the sole means. Instead, the cultural values of self-reliance are often implicitly underlined as the condition for Chinese people to acquire and enjoy emotion-themed modern identity.

An excellent example for this is the *Fiat* ad (see **Figure 6**) underpinning the cruciality of independence, rather than high technology, to experience such emotions. Although being largely presented in Chinese, within and across structural domains of this copy are observed of the mixing of such English words as "DIY-Do it yourself!", "Merry Christmas", "PARTY", and "YOU ARE ALWAYS IN MY HEART". *DIY-Do it yourself* can trigger a DIY frame structuring the DIY activity and roles of self-reliant persons. Deliberately verbalized in English alongside its history, the DIY frame certainly bears exclusively on the cultural specialty of independence in America. The detail of the DIY activity is verbally specified by the Chinese lines located within the space between *DIY-Do it yourself* and *party*, referring specifically to self-repair and -maintenance under the professional instructions given by the organizer of Fiat Motor Company. As such, in the DIY space "you" not only become the consumer of the Fiat but is also a technician at the same time.



Figure 6. The ad for *Fiat* from *Southeast Business News.*

Then, alongside the visible pictures of Santa Claus and gift bags in the upper right-hand corner, *Merry Christmas* verbally activates the CHRISTMAS frame structuring the generic elements of family gathering and Christmas celebration in western countries. Comprising two separate parts "十二月二五日菲亚特与您约会" *shi' er yue er' wu ri Feiyate yu nin yuehui* (*lit.* Fiat will meet you on 25th December) and "菲亚特的约会" *Feiyate de yuehui* (*lit.* Fiat' s appointment), the headline then triggers an INVITATION space structuring the elements of inviter (i.e., Fiat Motor Company), invitee (i.e., "you"), content (i.e., appointment), and date. The identical element of the date invites the cross-space mapping between the CHRISTMAS and INVITATIO spaces and vice versa, enriching the latter with the rendering of an appointment with the Company as identical as a family gathering.

Here notably, too, is another mapping across the DIY and INVITATION spaces. As such, it makes sensible to claim that the specific DIY activity in fact refers to the appointment with Fiat. When this piece of information is projected back into the INVITATION space, Chinese people as the target of viewers are convinced of the invitation to take part in this specific activity, and thereby orientated toward self-reliance yielded in the blend (see **Figure 7**).

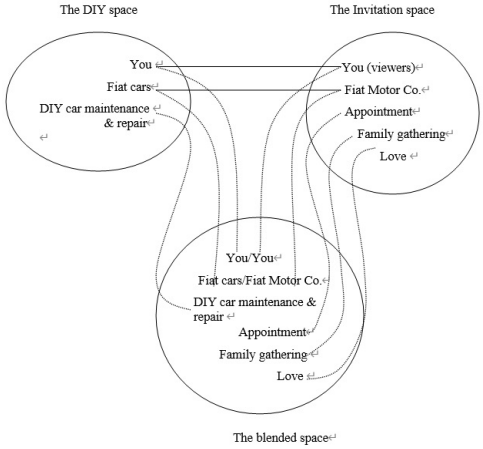


Figure 7. A simplified network diagram of the *self-reliant orientation* blend.

Like *Merry Christmas*, the use of *party* is very helpful in indicating its cultural implications. What is particularly emphasized through the use of *part* is not the Chinese understanding of social gathering but rather a culture-embedded form of amusement in the West, as supported by the last line in Chinese, just below *party*, spelling out a range of activities making attendees excited, passionate, funny, and joyful.

Figure 8 diagrams the selection of the PARTY and INVITATION spaces as the inputs to the emotion-orientation blend. By this, we can go further to connect the emotional rewards attained through an appointment with Fiat to the party. Simply stated, after this appointment, you will be experiencing excitement and joy in the same as you usually experience at a party. The Specific-General relationship of the DIY activity to the appointment, then, invites the inference emerged from this blend; that is, the specific DIY activity is distinct in the evocation of excitement, passion, and joy, thus leading to the production of a second meaning of this activity as the source of such emotions. Following this, we can continue to argue for the consistent impact of English phrase *DIY-Do it yourself* on the cognitive processing of identity construction and the emergent meaning.

Emphatically, the likelihood to experience such emotions stems chiefly from one's participation in this specific DTY activity. With this act of conceptual manipulation, the significance of self-reliance structured in the DIY space and the change of technology consumers into inventers are immensely intensified. It is through this way that self-reliance is highlighted as the condition for experiencing these emotions. Conclusively, this ad implicitly proposes the key to acquiring the emotion-themed modern identity is linked directly to integrating independence with the reliance on high technology, or vice versa.

The Party space The Invitation space

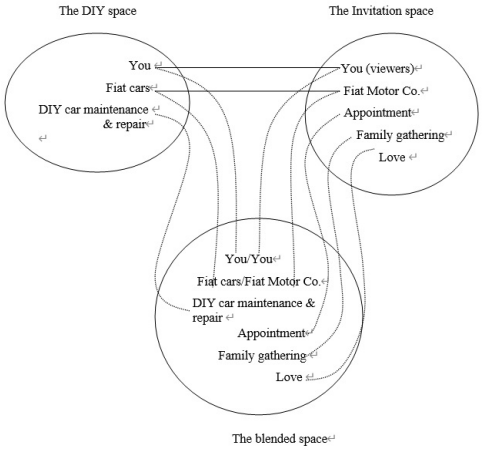


Figure 8. A simplified network diagram of the emotion-orientation blend.

5.3. Diligence and Perseverance as the Prerequisite

The third political dimension of modern identity is principally concerned with the prerequisite for the acquisition of modern identity, which is found especially clear in orientating Chinese people toward success. The data at hand also emphasizes the importance of the Confucian values of diligence and perseverance in particular[71] to become successful. Despite not being prevailingly presented, these Confucian values are implicitly accentuated as the vital prerequisite for achievement.

A good case in point is the ad for *Excelle* (see **Figure 9**),[6] the brand of a car by General Motors. The headline reads "IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE, 下一位凯越精英, 会是你吗?" (*xiayiwei Kaiyue jingying huishi ni ma*? *lit*. The next Excelle elite, will you?).

Importantly, three mental spaces, SEARCH, INVITATION, and INQUIRY, are activated by the headline at the same time. More specifically, by inducing the searcher, "you" indeed, the English prepositional phrase is a space builder creating a SEARCH space whose goal must be filled (**Figure 10**).[7] Alongside "excellence", the sketch of a car's top by the curve line at the top of the first seven letters of EXCELLENCE is also very important, in that it visualizes the promoted product as a second or another goal. Perhaps more

significantly, this visual element also indicates Excelle as a solution to locating excellence, which suggests further no effort to be taken in search of excellence only if purchasing an Excelle. This argument can be further enhanced or more evident, if referring to the visualization of Excelle as "offer", which is achieved by placing the sample to the left and by taking its photo from the oblique horizontal angle[72]. As to the Chinese question within the headline, while Chinese people as potential consumers are openly asked to be part of Kaiyue jingying (*lit*. Excelle elite) as a social group, the question per se certainly indicates the need to meet some requirements through the comparability of their qualities to this social group.



Figure 9. The Ad for Buick Excelle from Ningbo Evening News.

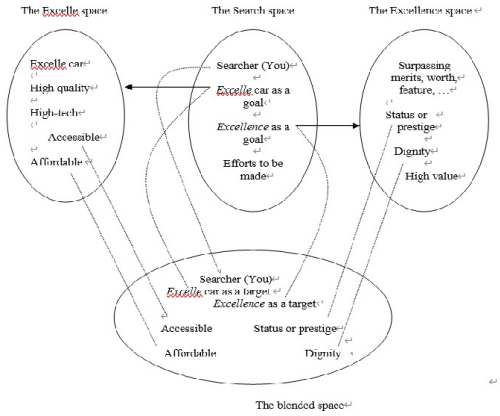


Figure 10. A simplified network diagram of the *Search* blend.

In this ad it is also quite clear of the manipulative role played by the use of English words in the construction of modern identity. Firstly, *Kaiyue jingying*, the Chinese translation of Excelle elite, can well be considered as the result of recontextualization, which makes arguable the replacement of its original meaning with the indigenized meaning. Both the Chinese slogan "全情全力 志在进取" *quanqing quanli zhi zai jinqu* (*lit*. aim to make progress with full passion and energy) and the Chinese lines in the body copy are associated with the allusion of this social group to Chinese people bearing on the merits or traits of optimism, diligence, determinedness, persistence, and success. From the KAIYUE-JINGYING blend thereby emerges a causative structure within which success is the result and diligence and continuous efforts, the cause. Another Cause-Effect relation is also generated within this local blend, thus depicting success as the result of prestige and high status. Therefore, one's enjoyment of prestige and high status is directly linked to their diligence and assiduous efforts. This piece of information as developed within the KAIYUE-JINGYING blend is significant for conceptual manipulation because of its availability for selection and being projected into the blend to "control spreading within configuration"[73]. The projection of this information into the INVITATION space engenders the inference in the blended space of INVITATION, that is, Do you desire to be successful and enjoy dignity and high status afterwards?. If projected into the INQUIRY space, it is blended there and developed with its own inference; this time the Chinese people are questioned if they are so diligent and perseverant that they can become successful. Apparently, the indigenization or localization of *Kaiyue jingying* carves out a space exclusively for Chinese people who are diligent and perseverant, which marks the clear-cut boundary between social groups in China and indicates the exclusivity of others to this particular social group.

Due to the indication of an ongoing act of search, the English preposition *in* used here is also helpful in strengthening the qualification of being successful. It is worth noting the SEARCH and INVITATION spaces indicates the vital relations of Time and Intentionality respectively, suggesting the mapping across these two spaces. As such, during the conceptual processing, the temporal interval is scaled down and fits into the blend within which a temporary conceptual representation emerges — the promoted car likely brings a successful life to you, so that you can enjoy dignity and high status afterwards. This is largely echoed and enhanced by the images of so-alleged successful people, as multimodally supplemented by their medially shot photos and their placement to the right as "the possible"[72]. Referring back to the INQUIRY space that requires people to meet some spe-

cial requirements in order to seek membership of this social group, when this inference information is also projected into the blend, the viewers of this ad themselves have to be as diligent and perseverant as possible, while dignity and high status potentially brought about by success seems to be acquired simply by means of purchasing the promoted project. Consequently, prestige and high status are upgraded in the blend as the desired effect brought about by a successful life, which is nevertheless conditioned by continuous hard work and efforts. This significantly sets up the connection of the use of *in search of* to this evaluation added to the sociocultural meaning of success.

Clearly, what is reproduced and valorized in/by this ad is the cultural belief in China that assiduous efforts and perseverance are fundamental to one's achievement. This seems especially plausible if referring to the increasing materialism in China's society today. By saying so, we may describe this ad under scrutiny as an instance of efforts being taken for ideological regulations to revive the Confucian values, specifically, of hard work and effort, although there is no provision of any reasons for naturalizing and legitimizing this sociocultural meaning of success. As a final point, the assumption of this cultural brief brings to the fore how the representation of success is cognitively manipulated in this ad[74].

6. Discussion and Conclusions

This article has explored the unspoken but subtle articulation and normalization of the discourse of modern identity as represented and normalized in China's auto ads through the mediation of culturally situated practice and ideologies of the English language. With the cognitive linguistic approach of critical multimodality able to produce "a rounded understanding of language-ideological forces and strategies that find values in identities"[8], it has mainly investigated the culturally situated ideas and interpretations of modern identity as materialized in its sociocultural and political meanings, as well as the discernible ways in which they are manipulatively mediated and appreciated through the tactic mobilization of English as an ideological complexity.

By investigating the cognitive processing of identity constructions in multimodal bilingual ads, the above examples illustrate forcefully how the English language contributes saliently to orienting Chinese people either towards success or emotions, or both, two distinctive themes of modern identity detected in the data at hand. English was largely used to evoke the cognitive meanings directly and explicitly for the themes under discussion. The symbolic meanings of English in China suggest that the use of English is absolutely much more powerful or helpful in persuasion for the ultimate purpose of modern identity construction. Sometimes semantic nuances and cultural meanings the Chinese counterpart fails to fulfill also attribute to the choice of English words instead. The roles English play in the manipulation of constructive processes, however, are often complicated and fluid and cannot be easily determined. This is, to varying degrees, faithfully related to the paradoxical attitudes and beliefs, as noted above, of the country toward English as a foreign language in China. Importantly, the various roles English may play, as found in the present study, are different than those reported in the extant literature[2, 30–34]. This finding, thus, is certainly attributable to the critical-cognitive approach adopted to exploring English-language-related identity constructions. Additionally, the representation of modern identity in Chinese auto ads, as examined, not only exemplifies the politics of modern identity in China, but also demonstrates powerfully how the localized meanings of English is manifested and ratified in, and becomes an intrinsic element of, the discourse of modern identity there.

In addition to the identification of two prominent themes and three social, cultural, and political meanings of modern identity, the article has examined the ideological connection of high technology to modern identity in China. This finding does not seem to be out of expectation, but is in alignment with China's belief of the cause-result relationship between high technology and realization of Four Modernizations. In contrast to high technology in the way stressed as an important, or even essential, means or tool for the construction of two themed modern identities, a dozen of auto ads celebrate the cultural merits of self-reliance, diligence, efforts, and perseverance, either individual or integrated, as an inescapable factor. This observation is of significance, in this sense that it foregrounds the essentialization of Confucian still as a conventional prescription for the ascription of modern identity to Chinese people. As the above analyses show, self-reliance, diligence, efforts, and perseverance as part of Confucian values and beliefs are being resolutely considered comple-

mentary to high technology in China's path to modernity. As such, English used in Chinese auto ads, too, works to underpin and reproduce the politics of technology there.

The fact that the orientations toward success and emotions often intertwine and intersect with these traits persuasively suggests the intimate relationship of cultural values to the politics of modern identity in China. Aside from the emphasis on high technology as an external element of significance, Chinese people as the target audience are also oriented toward self-reliance, diligence, and perseverance as important integral parts of modern identity. These findings explain forcefully that both high technology and the cultural values are equally important, so that they are discursively reframed as a political position of modern identity serving a range of political purposes—specifically, define high technology as an important means, delimit self-reliance as the crucial condition, and ascribe success to continuous efforts and perseverance. This study, thus, offers an illustration of how "an enriched understanding of individual identity might contribute to exploration of the meaning of collective identity"[75], one major kind of which is national identity. Future research may also examine the politics of national identity in China as constructed and normalized in Chinese-English bilingual advertising. As a final point, related to potential limitations of this study, future research needs to collect data from different sources so as to maximize the validity and generalization of the findings as discovered in this study.

Notes

1. In this study, the term "bilingual" refers exclusively to the use of English as a foreign or second language alongside the local language in advertising worldwide.
2. I am fully aware of the adoption of a cognitive perspective in van Dijk's[14, 76] approach of CDA but, in the way discussed by Hart and Lukês[61], van Dijk does not follow the features of cognitive linguistics.
3. The brand name of a product is contained in brackets, while those within parentheses refer to the literal translation of English. All Chinese expressions in Chinese character and *pinyin* (Chinese transliteration) are followed by the English translation. All translations are mine.
4. In **Figure 2**, solid lines are used to represent cross-space correspondences constituting the mapping across the inputs, and dotted lines refer to projections between spaces. They are also used in other network diagrams in the article.
5. In **Figure 5**, the dashed line between *GPS* in the Veracruz space and enjoyment and pleasure in the blend connects the latter to the source space GPS. This holds the same to other figures of network diagram in the article.
6. The analysis of this ad draws upon and develops that from Li[8].
7. The arrow lines between Excelle car as a goal and excellence as a goal in the Search space, and the Excelle and Excellence spaces respectively represent that the elements within the two spaces are also structured in the Search space.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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