

A Study on the Reception of Meanings and Value Resonance of Anti-Japanese War Film and Television Character Dialogue among Youth Groups

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Abstract: As an important medium of cultural memory, Anti-Japanese War film and television employs character dialogue not only as a narrative device but also as a core text that carries historical cognition and values. This study focuses on the reception process of Anti-Japanese War film and television character dialogue among youth groups, exploring the dynamic relationship between the meaning construction of the dialogue texts and the youth audience's reception of meaning and value resonance. The research first analyzes how dialogue accomplishes the generation of meaning through its narrative functions, linguistic representation, and multi-layered signification. Subsequently, it delves into the complex reception mechanism of youth audiences, which is based on their pre-existing cognitive structures and horizons of expectation, involves the adoption of active decoding strategies, and integrates intergenerational experience with contemporary context. Finally, this study elucidates the pathway through which value resonance is generated: from emotional mobilization and empathy triggering, to the identification and internalization of core values, and further to the activation of collective memory and the potential shaping of identity. This paper aims to provide a micro-level interpretive framework, grounded in discourse analysis and reception theory, for understanding the cultural efficacy and identity-constructing function of historical film and television works among contemporary youth.

Keywords: Anti-Japanese War film and television; character dialogue; youth groups; meaning reception; value resonance; decoding strategies; cultural memory

Introduction

In contemporary mediatized society, historical film and television works serve as important vehicles shaping the historical cognition and cultural identity of societal members. Among these elements, character dialogue, as a key symbolic unit that condenses narrative and meaning, undergoes a dynamic cycle of meaning through its production, dissemination, and reception. Existing research has largely focused on the macro narrative strategies or educational functions of film and television, with limited exploration from the micro-interactive perspective of discourse analysis and audience reception into how specific texts, such as dialogue, are activated and reconstructed in their encounter with youth audiences. As recipients possessing unique cognitive schemas and cultural practices, youth groups do not passively accept interpretations of historical film and television but engage in an active process of meaning reproduction. Therefore, investigating the reception of meaning and value resonance of Anti-Japanese War film and television character dialogue among youth groups can not only deepen our understanding of the intergenerational transmission mechanisms of film and television texts but also reveal the complex pathways through which mediatized historical memory participates in the construction of contemporary youth cultural identity, carrying significant theoretical value and practical necessity.

1. Textual Construction and Meaning Generation of Character Dialogue in Anti-Japanese War Film and Television

1.1 Narrative Function of Dialogue and Its Embedding in Historical Context

Character dialogue serves as a core mechanism driving narrative progression and constructing the

story world. Within the narrative framework of Anti-Japanese War film and television, dialogue primarily fulfills the functions of advancing the plot and externalizing conflict. The conversations and monologues between characters directly reveal objectives, display disagreements, and intensify contradictions, thereby condensing the grand historical background into specific interpersonal interactions and verbal exchanges. This discursive interaction not only outlines the linear development of events but also, on a micro level, gives concrete form to the collective dilemmas and individual choices present at specific historical junctures.

More crucially, dialogue accomplishes the artistic embedding of historical context. This embedding is not a mechanical replication of the historical scene but rather, through a set of specific discursive strategies, creates a perceptible "sense of history." The use of period-specific vocabulary, social relational terms of address, folk sayings, or rhetorical devices unique to particular contexts within the dialogue collectively weaves a symbolic system of signs. This system constructs a narrated "past" with its own internal logic, enabling the audience to traverse time and space and enter a historical atmosphere defined and tinted by language. Dialogue transforms abstract historical threads into an audible and tangible field of specific speech, providing a plausible context for character actions and pre-establishing the spatial-temporal coordinates for the production and flow of meaning.

1.2 Linguistic Representation in Character Portrayal

Character dialogue is the most direct and expressive instrument for constructing the subjectivity of film and television roles. The multidimensional shaping of a character profoundly depends on the uniqueness and consistency of their linguistic representation. The choice of vocabulary constitutes the most fundamental level, directly reflecting a character's social class, educational background, regional culture, and even psychological state^[1]. The refinement and restraint of intellectuals, the forthrightness and simplicity of ordinary soldiers, and the vividness and liveliness of common folk are all distinguished and established through differentiated lexical repertoires.

Sentence structure and discursive style further deepen the presentation of a character's personality and psychology. The complex logic of long sentences may suggest a character's deliberateness or inner conflict, while short sentences and repetition can convey urgency, resolve, or emotional impact. The discursive style—be it rational argumentation, emotional outpouring, taciturnity, or humorous irony—serves as an acoustic mirror of the character's inner world. Furthermore, dialogue outlines a character's growth arc through changes in their speech. The transformation in a character's linguistic patterns, conversational content, and discursive force before and after experiencing key events silently bears witness to the consolidation of their beliefs, the elevation of their cognition, or the evolution of their identity. This process liberates the characterization from flatness, endowing it with dynamic depth.

1.3 The Multi-layered Significance of Dialogue Texts

The meaning of character dialogue in Anti-Japanese War film and television is not singular or transparent; rather, it exhibits layers and openness. Its surface meaning serves the comprehension of the plot and the understanding of character relationships, but at a deeper level, it contains rich emotional connotations, ethical reflections, and symbols of collective memory.

Dialogue is a key carrier for the transmission and modulation of emotion. Through speech rhythm, tonal variation, and the use of subtext, dialogue can directly evoke or guide audiences to experience complex emotions such as compassion, reverence, indignation, and hope. These emotions do not exist in isolation but are closely bound to the narrative progression and character destinies, forming a continuum of emotional significance.

On the ethical dimension, dialogue often constitutes a field for the collision of values and moral choices. The utterances of characters in extreme situations, including both their content and their manner of speech, directly or indirectly touch upon fundamental ethical propositions such as courage, sacrifice, loyalty, humanity, and the concept of homeland. These dialogues do not provide standard answers; instead, by presenting verbal responses within dilemmas, they stimulate the audience to contemplate and discern the related ethical issues.

Ultimately, specific dialogues may be elevated into a form of cultural symbol, becoming condensed points of collective memory. Some highly refined, symbolic lines, due to their repeated occurrence or utterance in critical situations, transcend the specific plot to become symbolic references to an era, a spirit, or a shared history. These symbolized dialogue texts constitute part of cultural memory. Their

meaning is activated and enriched through continuous dissemination, citation, and reinterpretation, possessing the potential to enter broader social discourse spaces^[2].

2. The Meaning Reception Mechanism of Youth Groups Regarding Anti-Japanese War Film and Television Dialogue

2.1 The Pre-existing Cognitive Structure and Horizon of Expectation of Youth Audiences

Before encountering the dialogue in Anti-Japanese War film and television, youth groups are not in a state of cognitive vacuum. Their reception of meaning is profoundly influenced by a "pre-existing cognitive structure" formed by their accumulated knowledge, values, aesthetic preferences, and media literacy. This pre-structure originates from multiple channels: the framework of historical narratives transmitted by the formal education system; representations and discussions of specific historical periods within the field of popular culture; potential fragments of intergenerational memory from family narratives; and the complex flow of information and collision of viewpoints within internet spaces. These elements collectively shape a youth's a priori cognitive schema regarding that historical period and predispose their "horizon of expectation" when facing related texts.

This horizon of expectation determines the initial focus and direction of meaning extraction for the youth audience. For example, an audience interested in examining historical authenticity might concentrate more on the accuracy of period details within the dialogue, while an audience prioritizing individual fate and emotional expression might first capture the psychological fluctuations and human struggles conveyed through the characters' language. The pre-existing cognitive structure acts like a filter and interpretive lens for meaning, predefining which elements of dialogue will be perceived as central and which interpretive paths are more probable. Consequently, the same segment of dialogue may be directed towards distinct entry points for meaning within the cognitive frameworks of different youth audiences.

2.2 Active Decoding Strategies for Dialogue Meaning

In the specific process of reception, youth audiences do not adhere to a singular, linear path of meaning interpretation. Instead, they demonstrate significant agency by employing diversified decoding strategies. This agency manifests across multiple dimensions, including the acceptance, negotiation, and even reconstruction of the meanings pre-set by the text. Some audiences may adopt a "dominant decoding" approach that aligns with the producers' intended meaning, accepting the mainstream emotional tone and value orientation conveyed by the dialogue and integrating them into their own pre-existing cognitive systems.

However, the more prevalent and characteristic strategies of youth reception are "negotiated decoding" and "creative decoding." Negotiated decoding is evidenced when audiences accept the macro-narrative of the text while simultaneously questioning or personally revising the logic of certain specific dialogues, particular character statements, or implied value assumptions. For instance, they may comprehend the collectivist spirit embedded in the dialogue but concurrently reflect, from a modern perspective of individual rights, on its representation of the relationship between the individual and the collective. Creative decoding is more subversive and reproductive. Youth audiences may completely detach the dialogue from its original historical context, "appropriating" and "transforming" its meaning by grafting it onto contemporary internet slang, social hot topics, or subcultural symbols, thereby generating entirely new meanings that often carry a playful or ironic connotation. This decoding strategy highlights the participatory, ludic, and critical nature of youth culture. It dislodges the meaning of dialogue from its original narrative anchor, allowing it to achieve fluidity and extension within new cultural spaces^[3].

2.3 The Integration of Intergenerational Experience and Contemporary Context in Reception

The reception of meaning from Anti-Japanese War film and television dialogue by youth groups is, in essence, a practice of meaning-grafting across time and space. As a generation raised under entirely different socio-historical conditions, youth lack direct experience of the wartime era, and their perception of history is distinctly indirect and media-dependent. Therefore, their understanding of the dialogue inevitably necessitates transforming the "intergenerational experience" (i.e., the collective experience of previous generations or of history itself) carried by the text, through their own cognitive

frameworks, into units of meaning that can be connected to the "contemporary context."

This integration process manifests through two primary mechanisms. The first is "metaphorical linkage," where youth audiences draw analogies and create mappings between the universal human themes present in the dialogue—such as survival dilemmas, moral choices, emotional bonds, ideals, and beliefs—and the contemporary life issues they themselves face, such as academic pressure, career uncertainty, identity formation, and social relationships. This allows them to derive emotional resonance and philosophical insights that transcend the specific historical content.

The second mechanism is "symbolic translation." This involves extracting specific expressions, ideological slogans, or character declarations from the dialogue, stripping them of their concrete historical referents, and refining them into abstract cultural symbols representing qualities like resilience, resistance, solidarity, or sentiment. These symbols are then incorporated into the personal or peer-group lexicon for meaning-making, used to construct individual identity or group cultural narratives within the contemporary context. Through this fusion, historical dialogue ceases to be merely a statement about the past. Instead, it becomes a distinctive discursive resource for youth to understand the present, express themselves, and engage in intergenerational cultural dialogue^[4].

3. The Pathway from Meaning Reception to the Generation of Value Resonance

3.1 Emotional Mobilization and Empathy Triggering

The generation of value resonance finds its primary psychological foundation in profound emotional experience and empathic connection. As a highly personalized and contextualized vehicle of discourse, character dialogue in Anti-Japanese War film and television serves as the core medium for implementing emotional mobilization and constructing channels for empathy. This emotional mobilization transcends superficial sentimentality and relies on a subtle narrative poetics. Through its rhetorical strategies—such as the depth of meaning built by metaphor and symbolism, the emotional rhythm reinforced by repetition and parallelism, and the contrast formed by highly restrained speech and tense silence at critical moments—dialogue weaves a multi-layered network of emotional significance^[5]. This network couples precisely with visual imagery, sound design, and narrative pacing to systematically modulate the overall emotional tone, intensity, and direction of the text, thereby pre-establishing potential pathways for the audience's emotional investment.

The effective triggering of empathy, in turn, depends on the alignment between this artistically constructed emotional structure and the youth audience's own repository of emotional experiences. When the portrayal through dialogue of a character's hesitation, resolve, sacrifice, or tenacious hope in extreme situations is encoded into a psychological language of universal human relevance that transcends the specific historical context, it can penetrate the barrier of time and space to resonate deeply with contemporary youth's own life experiences of adversity, choice, loss, and pursuit. This process is not a passive emotional contagion but an "cognitive empathy" involving the active participation of the subject. On the basis of understanding the narrative logic and the character's predicament, the audience uses the dialogue as a conduit to simulate the character's psychological state in their imagination, achieving a vicarious emotional experience. This profound emotional involvement diminishes the sense of distance inherent in purely rational scrutiny, creating a preparatory psychological field conducive to both accepting and reflecting upon the text's deeper values.

3.2 The Identification and Internalization of Core Values

Building upon the receptive psychological foundation created by emotional resonance, the deeper process of value resonance manifests as the active identification and progressive internalization of the core values embedded within the text. The dialogue in Anti-Japanese War film and television serves as a discursive field where multiple values engage in dialogue, conflict, and representation. The value propositions involved—such as individual dignity versus collective responsibility, the profound yearning for peace versus the courage to resist injustice, and the resilience and ethical choices demonstrated in extreme adversity—are not presented as abstract doctrines. Instead, they are skillfully narrativized and embodied; that is, they are embedded within characters' specific verbal actions, internal conflicts, and the narrative consequences these trigger^[6].

The value identification undertaken by the youth audience is a subjective process of critical

interpretation. Relying on their own frame of reference—shaped by modern socio-cultural influences, education, and personal experiences, and often emphasizing critical reflection, individual consciousness, and humanistic concern—they scrutinize, evaluate, and filter the flowing stream of value-based information within the text. Those value expressions that align with their existing values, offer beneficial supplements, or, even if creating tension, provoke deep reflection are more readily identified as "valid" and "relevant."

Internalization is the continuation and deepening of identification. It refers to the process whereby these recognized value elements gradually transform from external textual information into an integral part of the individual's internal value structure. This process is typically implicit and not immediately completed. It may manifest as a deepened understanding of certain value principles, subtle shifts in emotional inclination regarding related issues, or implicit adjustments to cognitive frameworks when facing similar situations in the future. Internalization does not constitute a complete replacement of values; rather, it introduces new hues or intensifies existing ones within the youth's pre-existing, pluralistic, and dynamic value spectrum.

3.3 Activation of Collective Memory and the Potential Shaping of Identity

As a significant medium of cultural memory, the widespread dissemination and repeated reception of character dialogue from Anti-Japanese War film and television continuously participates in the contemporary construction and reproduction of social collective memory concerning that specific historical period. Within this macro-process, it exerts an indirect and potential shaping influence on the cultural identity formation of youth groups. The classic lines and dialogic confrontations from key scenes, through repeated media presentation and widespread social citation, can crystallize into "memory symbols" possessing high symbolic potency and emotional charge. These symbols detach from singular film and television texts and enter a broader field of cultural circulation, becoming cultural nodes connecting individual lived experience with abstract collective memory.

For the younger generation who grew up in peacetime and whose perception of history primarily stems from systems of cultural representation, these narrative and emotional fragments reinforced through dialogue constitute a crucial medium through which they imagine, comprehend, and emotionally approach that historical period. By receiving, internalizing, and occasionally invoking or discussing these dialogues and their carried meanings in peer-based cultural interactions, youth groups unwittingly engage in a form of "inherited memory work." This work does not aim to reproduce a complete historical objectivity; rather, it signifies their incorporation into the network of meaning exchange within a cultural community for which this historical narrative serves as a significant backdrop.

In the long term, this sustained discursive participation and practice may subtly influence their cognitive schema regarding their own cultural belonging. That is, within the modern mosaic of pluralistic identities interwoven with globalization and individualization, a piece of cultural fabric woven from shared, mediatized historical memory gradually becomes embedded. This form of identification is situational, non-exclusive, and remains in a state of continuous dialogue and negotiation with their other social identities (such as profession, interest-based communities, global citizenship awareness, etc.).

Conclusion

Through a systematic analysis of the textual construction of character dialogue in Anti-Japanese War film and television, the meaning reception mechanisms of youth groups, and the pathway for generating value resonance, this study reveals a dynamic process from textual meaning encoding to active audience decoding, culminating in deep-seated value identification. The research finds that dialogue constructs a multi-layered space of meaning through subtle narrative poetics and linguistic artistry. Youth audiences, leveraging their pre-existing cognitive structures, engage in diversified decoding ranging from dominant to creative strategies, and creatively integrate historical texts with their own life experiences. The generation of value resonance relies on the triggering of emotional empathy and the critical identification and internalization of core values. In this process, it subtly participates in the reproduction of collective memory, for which dialogue serves as a symbolic node, and in the potential shaping of cultural identity. This process highlights the role of youth as active interpreters and underscores the contemporary significance of historical film and television as a "living" medium of memory. Future research could expand into the dissemination and variation of

dialogue elements across different media forms, such as short videos and interactive games. Alternatively, cross-cultural comparative studies could be conducted to explore the differences in the reception of similar historical narratives among different youth groups, thereby achieving a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interrelationships between media, memory, and youth cultural identity.

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