THE NARRATIVE TIME ON PIXAR ANIMATED FILM "COCO" FROM

HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

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Chen Yue

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Author:   Miss Chen Yue


Independent Study Committee:


Advisor

........................................................
(Asst. Prof. Dr. Suwannee Luckanavanich)


Field Specialist

........................................................
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pacharaporn Kesaprakorn)


........................................................
(Asst. Prof. Dr. Siriwan Rujibhong)

Dean of the Graduate School

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The Narrative Time on Pixar Animated Film "COCO" from Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (67 pp.)

Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Suwannee Luckanavanich, Ph.D.

## ABSTRACT

This research selected the Pixar animated film "COCO" as a research case. The film takes the Mexican Day of the Dead as the theme and brings a successful cross-cultural communication to audiences all over the world, and won the 90th Academy Awards for Best Animated Feature. This research started from the narrative time of the beginning, development, climax, and ending of the film "COCO", and analyzed the manifestations of different cultural dimensions in the film by combining important plots, scenes, and dialogues. The research results indicate that the animated film "COCO" embodies the six cultural dimensions of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, namely: High Power Distance, High Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Masculinity, Long-term Orientation, and Indulgence. Based on the research results, the research also summarized some narrative strategies for animation film production, and provided some suggestions for Chinese animation film creation.

*Key words: Narrative Time, Animated film "COCO", Cultural dimension*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES (Continued)

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction of the study

In 2017, an animated film called "COCO" was released worldwide, which not only triggered a global movie-watching boom, but also broke through one billion yuan of box office revenue in mainland China. The audiences' acceptance of this film is very high.

"COCO" is the 19th animated feature film of Pixar Animation Studios, which took five years to produce. This is Pixar's most popular animated film in the past decade. It won the best animated feature film at the 90th Academy Awards and the best animated feature film at the 75th Golden Globe Awards. This animation is based on Mexican culture and the theme of "Day of the Dead." The protagonist is a 12-years-old Mexican boy Miguel (Mig) a musical dream, but music is banned by his family, who consider music to be a curse. On the day of the Dead, Mig took a chance to set foot on the land of the dead because he touched a guitar of "Singing God." Mig was attracted by the colorful world of the dead and he met his long-lost relatives. In the process of Mig's family trying to send him back to the real world, Mig unexpectedly discovered the truth of many things, including the ins and outs of his family's prohibition of music. In the end, Mig rescued his great grandfather who was about to die in the world of the dead, then he returned to the real world and let his family embraced music again.

The reason why this animated film is so successful is that it can be easily accepted and understood by the audience, and has emotional resonance from animation design to storyline. From the perspective of animation design, the "World of the Dead" in the film is warm tones and full of joyful music. The skeletons of people who passed away are also lively and cute, and wearing all kinds of clothes. It has not brought a sense of horror to the audience at all, and reflects the optimistic attitude towards death in Mexican culture. From the plot point of the story, Pixar maintains its previous production advantages. It combines entertainment, artistry, and technology together, and at the same time regards "kinship" as the core soul of the film. The concept of accompany our family and the perception of family first has moved audiences of all cultures from different cultural backgrounds and achieved a successful cross-cultural communication.

The increasing professionalism of animation film production has gradually made it one of the important ways of people's life and pastime. As a result, the audience of animated films is no longer limited to children, but is loved by more adults. At the same time, an excellent animated film is not only entertaining, but also educational or can reflect certain cultural values. This research will analyze the story of Pixar's animated film "COCO," explore the cultural dimension embodied in this film, and allow the audience to understand its meaning more deeply.

**1.2 Rationale and Problem Statement**

The international success of an animated film will involve many factors, including marketing mechanisms, communication channels, animation content, and production technology. However, the most important point for effective communication is to focus on the narration of animated film stories. Judging from most relevant journals, the narrative research on Pixar animated films occupies a large proportion. He (2015), in the article "Analysis of Hollywood Animation's Narrative Strategy from the animated film "RIO", believes that Pixar's narrative model is influenced by the Hollywood model. From the perspective of narrative structure, narrative content, and narrative strategy, it is believed that Pixar animated films have added modern elements in both the linear structure of narrative and the transformational type of plot. This makes the time and space of narrative and the role of narrative more modern, and narrows the gap with the audience. This is also the reason for Pixar's success.

With a novel vision, "COCO" combined with the unique Mexican culture and conveyed a completely different view of life and death to the audiences. However, it is similar to the universal cultural values, that is, valuing family and family first. This animation breaks the audience's stereotype of death with a novel narrative perspective, and uses a transparent narrative method to enhance the audience's sense of substitution, and also allows the audience to pay attention to the cultural values behind the animated film. In addition to the overall film narrative research, the narrative role is also the focus of the study of the Pixar animated film "COCO"

because the success of the character creation can directly determine whether the film attracts audiences.

This is the question of this research:

By analyzing the narrative mode of the Pixar animated film "COCO," which cultural dimensions are found in this film?

## 1.3 Research Objective

Animation is a very good form of cultural communication media, which has important value for improving the effect of international cultural communication. This research will explore the six cultural dimensions in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and based on the narrative time of the Pixar animation film "COCO".

The following are the objectives of this research:

Objective #1: To analyze the embodiment of Power Distance in the film "COCO"

Objective #2: To analyze the embodiment of Uncertainty Avoidance in the film "COCO"

Objective #3: To analyze the embodiment of Masculinity versus Femininity in the film "COCO"

Objective #4: To analyze the embodiment of Individual versus Collectivism in the film "COCO"

Objective #5: To analyze the embodiment of Long-term Orientation versus Short-term Orientation in the film "COCO"

Objective #6: To analyze the embodiment of Indulgence versus Restraint in the film "COCO"

**1.4 Scope of the Research**

In the context of cross-cultural communication, both the industry and academia are paying great attention to this cross-cultural work, and animation works on related themes are also showing a blowout trend. This research selects the relatively representative value of animation film "COCO" from many animated films for case study. In this way, it is possible to conduct in-depth research from the macro-level proposal to the specific micro-analysis. Therefore, this study only uses Pixar's animated film "COCO" as a case for its narrative research and cultural dimensions analysis, which cannot represent the situation of other movies. At the same time, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory is the theoretical basis of the research, so the data collection and analysis of this research are only within the six cultural dimensions involved in the theory, namely: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity versus Feminity, Individualism versus Collectivism, Long-term Orientation versus Short-term Orientation, Indulgence versus Restraint.

**1.5 Significant of the Study**

*a. Academic Significance*

At this stage, there are few researches on the cultural dimensions of Pixar animated film content, and more researches on Pixar animated films focus on cross-cultural or musical perspectives. And this research starts from the content of Pixar's animated film "COCO" and relies on the narrative timeline to make a qualitative analysis of the film's Beginning, Development, Climax, and Ending, and study the cultural dimension of this film. At the same time, the researcher hopes that by studying the cultural dimensions of the Pixar animation film "COCO," we can systematically explore the importance of bringing animation cultural value to the world.

*b. Practical significance*

First of all, animated film is not only entertaining, but also has a certain educational significance. It has certain social problems or reflections of cultural values. An excellent animated film can not only bring joy to the audience but also affect the audience's perception of values. Taking the best animated feature film of the 90th Academy Awards "COCO" as a research case, starting from the narrative time and combining the plot to explore the embodiment of the film's cultural dimension, it can be more profoundly understood that animated films can bring cultural value spread.

Secondly, the cross-cultural dissemination of animated films has realized international cultural exchange. As a cultural product, animated films will inevitably carry the cultural elements of the country in the process of formation, including its

national spirit, social customs, and cultural traditions. By studying the narrative characteristics and cultural dimensions of the Pixar animation film "COCO," the researcher hopes to provide a reference for the creation of other animation films.

Finally, it provides guiding suggestions for the narrative practice of Chinese animated films. In the study of domestic animated films in China, scholars have generally found that there are technically difficult thresholds for Chinese animation creation. Pixar has created many excellent animation works with its wonderful creativity and strong computer technology. As a researcher from China, we should directly look at the development of the national animation industry and strengthen the research on domestic animation films.

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

**1.6.1 *Pixar Animation Studio:*** A company specializing in computer animation in the United States. It has wonderful creativity and advance technology. In this study, "COCO" is the film which is produced by Pixar.

**1.6.2 *"COCO":*** It is the Pixar Animation Studio's 19th animated film. Inspired by the Mexican Day of the Dead, the film tells the story of a young boy, Mig, who loves music and starts a wonderful journey in the mysterious world of the dead.

**1.6.3 *Power Distance:*** It can be used to express people's acceptance of the unequal distribution of power in organizations, and to a large extent shows the authority of power distance. Power distance can be divided into high and low points, which can be

expressed by the PDI (Power distance index). High PDI means that this person, team, nation, etc. advocate power and pay attention to hierarchy, such as Chinese society; the low PDI means that equality is emphasized and the level difference is low, as in American society.

**1.6.4** *Uncertainty Avoidance:* It refers to whether individuals and society are affected by uncertain events or unconventional environmental effects, whether they will avoid and control uncertainty through formal channels. Uncertainty avoidance can also be expressed by UAI (Uncertainty Avoidance Index). High UAI said that the social culture is more inclined to prevent the occurrence of risks and pursue stability, such as the "lifetime employment system" in Japanese companies; Low UAI means that the social culture is more focused on the present, tends to relax attitude towards life and encourages adventure, such as the timely pleasure of Americans.

**1.6.5** *Individualism VS. Collectivism:* It indicates the degree of association between individuals and groups. The culture of individualism focuses on individual goals and pays attention to oneself. On the contrary, collectivist culture emphasizes collective goals. People expect their collective to take care of them, and they have a certain degree of loyalty to the collective.

**1.6.7** *Masculinity VS. Femininity:* It expresses people's understanding of how male and female roles are assigned. Members of a masculine society usually have more masculine qualities such as ambition, power, and determination; the members of a feminine society are more feminine with caring for others, sensibility, and attention to

detail.

**1.6.8** *Long-term Orientation VS. Short-term Orientation:* This is a new cultural dimension developed based on Eastern culture. Long-term orientation means that the social culture is more inclined to pursue the future and treat life with a long-term vision, such as saving; The short-term orientation encourages facing the present, not willing to sacrifice the present for the future.

**1.6.9** *Indulgence VS. Restraint:* It is the latest cultural dimension added to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. Indulgent culture tends to allow people to enjoy nature and the joys of life relatively freely; the restrictive culture believes that human nature and life enjoyment should be restricted by stricter social norms.
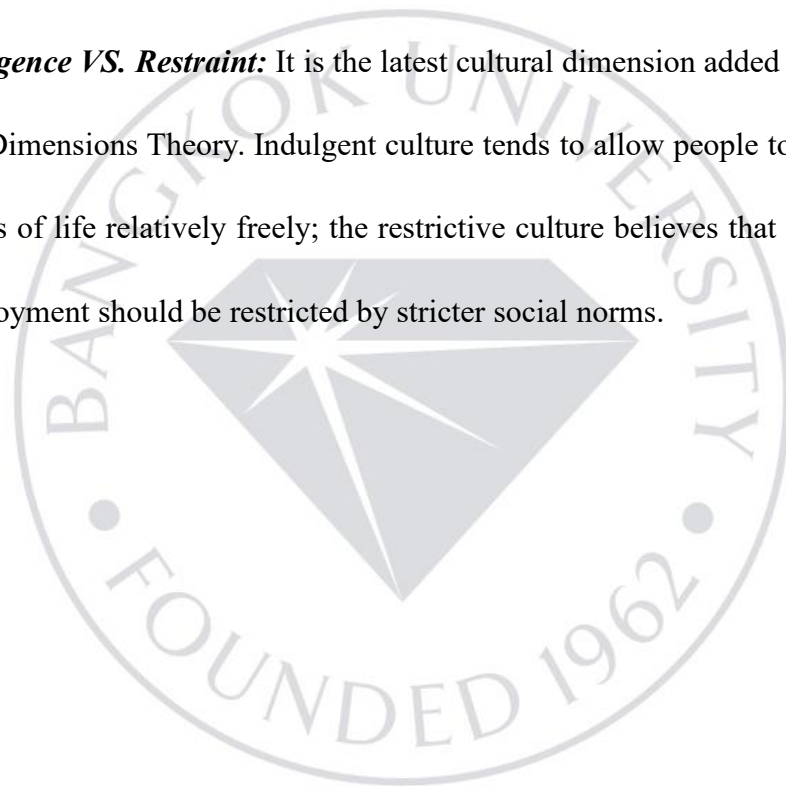
# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Related Literature and Previous Studies

### 2.1.1 Narrative characteristics of animated films

Animated films create real or virtual spaces for storytelling by integrating various expression methods such as photography, art, painting, and technology. The animations produced by Disney have become the benchmark of contemporary animation movies. From the "Snow White" broadcast in 1937 to the live-action version of "The Lion King" created in 2019, they are all sought after by audiences of all ages. The biggest narrative feature of Disney animated films is that they adopt the classic Hollywood narrative model, which tightly grasps the audience's sight and psychology. Its three most typical characteristics are continuity, conflict and typed (Yang, 2012).

a.  Continuity is not only the biggest feature of Hollywood classic narrative mode, but also the most important magic weapon for general movie narrative. It constructs the continuity of the film, can make the audience curious, and the curiosity of the characters or plot of the film enables them to continue watching the movie.

b. Conflict eliminates the boredom of the audience through the three-stage structure of "beginning -development -climax", while creating a plot of conflict and suspense to attract the audience's attention. The narrative of the whole film presents a

wave-like trend of "balance - conflict –rebalance," which makes the storyline ups and downs.

c. The subject matter, background, and main characters of typed movies may change, but the narrative structure and storyline basically maintain a dynamic balance, and the plot of the movie is basically in the audience's expectations.

In communication, the second layer of audience contact is the story layer, that is, the story meaning conveyed by animated films. The narrative mode is a means of giving meaning to the story, and the narrative mode is not an objectively existing concept, but is subjective. It is a means for the narrator to construct a narrative object through a series of techniques. Through various aspects such as role shaping, structure arrangement, plot setting, music combination, theme presentation, etc., a complete three-dimensional narrative object is conveyed as a whole (Wang, 2013).

*2.1.2 The Narrative Research of Pixar Animation Film "COCO"*

In the animated film "COCO," the "world of the dead" is an important scene, and all the people who have passed away still "live" here. Except for the fantasy architectural design and the colorful environment, it is basically no different from the real world, allowing the audience to feel and understand its animation plot more intuitively. The narrative mode of the animated film "COCO" has the following characteristics:

*a. Narrative vision*

Narratology theorist Gerald Prince believes that "one of the most important tasks of narratology is to study the impact of narrative focus on people's cognition, emotion, interpretation, and response". And animated films are no exception, using narrative techniques to convey emotion and perception to the audience. The focus in the movie means that in the center of the story, the visual center character can observe the development of the whole story, which affects the audience's cognition and grasp of the whole event. Based on this, Genette (1980) distinguishes three types of focus modes: zero focus, inner focus and outer focus. Zero focus means that the author adopts a god-like perspective to make an omnipotent narrative of the event. Inner focus refers to narrating from the perspective of a certain character. Out-focusing refers to narrating from the perspective of the bystander, without any subjective content. And inner focus divided into fixed internal focusing, transforming internal focusing and multiple internal focusing (Li, 2013).

In the Pixar animated film "COCO," the narrative perspectives of fixed internal focus and multiple internal focus are mostly used to explain the animation film. (Zhang & Guo, 2019) Fixed internal focus means that when the audience is watching a movie, they can only watch from the perspective of a certain person in the movie, and can only see what the person perceives, and cannot know what other people think. The audience needs to understand the movie based on the feelings of this character. For multiple internal focus in a movie, the narrative is unfolded through the subjective perspective of multiple characters. Compared with the fixed internal focus, the multiple internal focus method enables the recipient to have a more comprehensive

understanding of the story of the entire movie when watching an animated movie (Li, 2013). In the film "COCO," the plot is mostly developed from the perspective of the protagonist Mig, allowing the audience to follow Mig to experience his journey in the "World of the Dead." At the same time, the perspectives of other characters are interspersed to allow the audience to fully understand the story and be moved by the family affection in the story.

### b. Narrative structure

The narrative structure is the narrative context of the entire movie, it is the model of the scene representation in the animated movie, and supports the overall arrangement of the entire movie story. There are many types of narrative structures. In American animated films, there are common linear narrative structures and dramatic narrative structures, which are more common in animated films of Disney and Dream Works. In the narrative of Pixar animated films, binary opposition is the most commonly used narrative structure. That is, in the story of an animated film, there are not only a pair of contradictions but a variety of contradictions intertwined with each other (Hua, 2011). Through the confrontation of multiple contradictory subjects, the plot is pushed to the climax, and the contradiction is finally resolved, presenting a happy ending and profound narrative theme.

In the Pixar animated film "COCO," the narrative protagonist Mig is opposed to the outside world at first, which because his family does not support his musical dreams. In addition, there is the opposition between the protagonist Miguel and the

external environment of society, which is embodied here as a human being in the real world who has come to the "World of the Dead." In addition, the protagonist Mig also opposes the supporting role, that is, the "Singing God" who is respected but is actually a murderer. In "COCO," there is not only a main contradiction, but also branch contradiction. Any protagonist who wants to grow up or get a happy ending is bound to have many difficulties. This kind of plot that is opposed to the contradictions of society or family can reveal the profound issues of animated films. The more branches of the film's narrative structure, the more it can highlight the ups and downs of the story, and the more it can promote the climax of the plot, the more interesting and watchable the animation film can be (Zhang & Guo, 2019).

*c. Narrative skills*

The narrative technique of "defamiliarization" has two meanings, one is the expression of the opposite sex of objective things; the other is the delayed narration of the narrative plot. The expression of the opposite sex of objective things is to describe things that are commonplace as extraordinary things, so as to make people feel fresh (Ji, 2019). The "World of Dead" in the Pixar animation film "COCO" is a novel design display. In the world of dead, if you are remembered more by the world, your life will be more glamorous; the less people remember you, you will be impoverished; If no one in the world remembers you, then you will no longer exist in the world of the dead, ushering in the "ultimate death." This innovative treatment makes it easy for the audience to understand Mexican culture. At the same time, the production team designed this "World of the Dead" with brilliant colors and architecture, with

fireworks, parties. It also eliminated the audience's fear of death and subtly accepted Mexico's relaxed attitude towards death (Wang, 2018).

On the other hand, the delayed expression of the story's plot prevents the audience from knowing the ending of the story immediately. The audience needs to experience risks and frights together with the animation protagonist, which caters to the audience's pursuit of exciting movie-watching emotions. "COCO" makes use of the delay of the storyline to express the "stimulating" emotions evoked, and will not create barriers due to different cultural backgrounds. "COCO" uses the delayed expression of the storyline to evoke the audience's "stimulating" movie-watching emotions, so that the audience will not have different understandings due to different cultural backgrounds. This kind of narrative technique enables the audience to understand the meaning of the film as the plot develops in the intercultural communication of the film.

### 2.1.3 Animated film narration fits the audience's general emotions

Although in cross-cultural communication, what needs to be achieved is the dialogue between two different ethnic groups, and it is necessary to break through the understanding arising from different cultural backgrounds. But people still have innate similarities between others, such as people's understanding of truth, goodness and beauty, and understanding of emotional meanings such as tension and stimulation. Just like in Pixar's first feature-length animation "Toy Story," in addition to the friendship between toys, there are also children's feelings of treating toys as their

good friends, which reminds audiences of their happy childhood, and the theme of "COCO" is family affection (Liu, 2018). When narrating an animated film, it fits the audience's general feelings of watching the movie, so as to realize the meaning exchange in cross-cultural communication.

Most Pixar animated films use the expression technique of internal focus, so that when the audience receives the information of the film, they are watching the film from the first person perspective (Qin, 2019). This makes it easier for the audience to accept the meaning conveyed by the movie, reduces the narrative distance with the protagonist, and achieves the effect of transparent narration. In cross-cultural communication, this transparent narrative effect will not be weakened by different cultural backgrounds, but will make the audience and the protagonist of the animated film no boundary, thus gaining emotional recognition. "ME" is far more persuasive than the self-reports of others. It turns oneself into the first information person and achieves a deep meaning of persuasion, thereby understanding the hidden value and enhancing the persuasive power of Pixar animation films in cross-cultural communication (Liu, 2019).

The "defamiliarization" narrative technique will stimulate the audience's curiosity and cater to the audience's stimulating movie-watching emotions. But it does not mean that as long as the production of animated films completely follows the "defamiliarization" element, it will definitely attract the attention of the audience, and it may also cause the "Decoding Delay" in cross-cultural communication (Lin, 2020). The audience's decoding process is not immediate, but needs to go through three

processes: surface structure decoding, deep meaning decoding, and the reaction of the receiving process. When discussing cross-cultural communication, what we are facing is that the audience is different from other people in our own national culture. Only the people of other ethnic groups can complete the decoding of the deep meaning, which is a powerful element to promote cross-cultural communication. If the creator simply pursue "defamiliarization" and break away from the audience's understanding of the limited space, the meaning conveyed by the communicator will not be consistent with the meaning understood by the audience, which will inevitably cause decoding delays and weaken the meaning and value of animated films.

Therefore, when Pixar created the animated film "COCO," it made many special designs to cater to the audience's viewing needs (Zhang & Chen, 2020). On the one hand, in cross-cultural communication, the primary audience for animated films is children. Children's world is innocent and kind, and lacks the concept of death. Therefore, the Pixar animation film treats the bloody element of "death" as a fairy tale, creating a colorful "World of Dead" and cute skeletons to cater to children's psychology, and no longer visually describe death from the perspective of adults. On the other hand, "COCO" describes a world like this for us: after death, people are not separated from their families, but they continue to live in the "World of the Dead." On the Day of the Dead, they can return to the world and reunite with their families. If we can always remember them, they will always exist. This kind of love for family members can cross any cultural background and the stories centered on family affection have given global audiences spiritual comfort and thus generated cultural

identity.

## 2.1.4 About Intercultural Resonance between Mexico and China from "COCO"

The cross-cultural spiritual resonance in the film is mainly reflected in two aspects:

*a.  Strong family values*

"COCO" has gorgeous scenes and beautiful music, but the most touching thing is still the warm family story in the movie. In the movie, COCO is the only one who remembers Hector in the world of the dead. She is also Hector's daughter and the great-grandmother of the hero Miguel. Although she was gray-haired and her memory was declining, she still missed her father Hector, and even when she was dying, a song "Remember me" created by her father Hector made her wake up. In addition, the affection between the grandchildren of Hector and the protagonist Miguel, and the family of Miguel in the film are all shown through the details of the story, even people without the same cultural background can feel it.

The life scene of the four generations of the Miguel family in the film is very similar to the traditional Chinese culture. Since ancient times, the Chinese have had several generations living together of cultural customs, which is the lifestyle that every traditional family actively pursues (Xu & Mao, 2019). In the film, both Miguel and his high grandfather, Hector, had conflicts with their family because of their musical dreams, but they finally realized that family talent is the most important. This phenomenon is not only a reflection of the real life in Mexico, it is also widespread in

China, so it can resonate with Chinese audiences. The film makes young people who are far from home and work hard to understand: Family and dreams can have both, and conflicts with family can be resolved because of love (You & Li, 2019). These all reflect the similar family views of Mexicans and Chinese.

### b. Similar sacrificial culture and paper-cutting culture

Both the Day of the Dead in Mexico and the Tomb Sweeping Festival in China have the meaning of sacrificial ancestors, including the altar is also very similar. The altar is generally divided into three layers, with pictures of the deceased on the top, foods they liked during their lifetime on the second, and candles on the bottom. Although the forms of sacrificial culture in Mexico and China are different, the feelings of remembrance of ancestors are the same, and they are the sustenance of people's lives and heart (You & Zhi, 2019).

At the same time, the beginning of "COCO" used a lot of paper-cutting to describe the family history of the Miguel's family. This is Mexican paper-cutting. Like the Chinese paper-cutting art, it is a folk art full of ethnic characteristics, used in folk activities. Mexican paper-cuts do not emphasize symmetry and generally use small hammers to strike out patterns; but Chinese paper-cuts emphasize symmetry and mainly use scissors to cut out patterns (You & Zhi, 2019). The fusion of these cultural elements, as well as the thoughts of love and dreams in the plot, make Chinese audiences unfamiliar with Mexican culture feel new and resonate at the same time.

**2.2 Concepts and Related Theories**

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory was put forward by Geert Hofstede, a Dutch psychologist, as a framework for measuring cultural differences in different countries. He believes that culture is a psychological procedure that people share in an environment and can distinguish a group of people from others. From 1967 to 1973, Hofstede conducted a large-scale cultural value survey at the famous multinational company IBM (International Business Machines Corporation), and his team conducted two rounds of questionnaire surveys on IBM employees. Through this research, he summarized the differences between different cultures into six basic dimensions of cultural values.

*2.2.1 Power Distance Index (PDI)*

It refers to the acceptance of unequal distribution of power in society or organizations by people with low status in a society. People in different countries and different cultural backgrounds have different understandings of power (Hofstede, G, 1980). For example, in a society with large power distances (China, South Korea), employees of enterprises have great respect for their superiors; in a society with small power distances (such as Europe), employees of enterprises do not fear superiors.

*2.2.2 Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)*

It refers to whether a society is threatened by uncertainty or unconventional environment, whether to avoid and control this uncertainty through formal channels. The cultural environment with a high degree of avoidance pays more attention to

authority, status, age, etc., and will establish more formal rules, do not tolerate extreme views and behaviors, and believe in absolute knowledge and expert evaluation. The cultural environment with a low degree of avoidance will be more tolerant of abnormal behavior, with fewer rules and regulations, and different ideas in philosophy and religion exist at the same time (Hofstede, G, 1980). The low value of UAI (Uncertainty Avoidance Index) indicates that a certain society or group prefers risk, otherwise it indicates that they are not good at accepting new things and aversion to risk.

### 2.2.3 Individual versus Collectivism (IDV)

Hofstede (1980) believes that this dimension measures whether a society always focuses on individual interests or collective interests. In an individualism-oriented society, the relationship between people is loose, and people tend to care about themselves; while a society with collectivism tends to focus on group relations, care about the extended family, and strong ethnic relations can give people continuous protection, and individuals also need to have absolute loyalty to ethnic groups. In a group with a high IDV (Individual Dimension Index) value, people are better at making their own decisions and advocating the concept of equality for everyone. Therefore, they like to make decisions through discussion with others and promote teamwork.

### 2.2.4 Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)

It mainly depends on whether a society represents more man's qualities (such as

competitiveness) or woman's qualities (such as tenderness and consideration), and the definition of the functions of men and women (Hofstede, G, 1980). The larger the value of MDI (Masculinity Dimension Index), the more obvious the tendency of masculinization in the society, and the other is the prominent femininity of the society.

## 2.2.5 Long-term Orientation versus Short-term Orientation Index (LTO)

It refers to the degree to which members of a certain culture can accept the delay in satisfying their material, emotional, and social needs (Hofstede, G, 1980). Long-term oriented social groups have stronger perseverance and focus on shame; while short-term oriented society is just the opposite, focusing on conservative stability and respect for tradition. Economic globalization is a cultural expression of long-term orientation. Scholars believe that long-term orientation is one of the main reasons for promoting economic development.

## 2.2.6 Indulgence versus Restraint Index (IVR)

Hofstede (1980) pointed out that this dimension refers to a society's basic human needs and the allowable degree of enjoying life. The larger the value of indulgence means that the society as a whole has little binding force on itself, and the society allows a greater degree of self-indulgence. This dimension is also newly added.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

In order to better study the cultural dimension of the Pixar animated film "COCO," this part will introduce the design, methods and samples of this study in detail, and it will also explain how to collect data and interpret data. This chapter includes research design, research materials, research procedure, data collection, textually analysis, and reliability, validity and limitations.

## 3.1 Research Design

Since this research is based on the Pixar animated film "COCO" as a case, the researcher will explore the manifestation of different cultural dimensions in the film according to the narrative time. This research belongs to qualitative research and chooses the method of textual analysis. Qualitative research is a basic research paradigm in the field of social sciences and one of the important steps and methods of scientific research. It is different from quantitative research. Qualitative research is a way for researchers to define or deal with problems. The specific purpose is to study the characteristics or behaviors of objects in depth, and to further explore the causes of problems.

According to the narrative time, this research will divide the plot of the Pixar animated film "COCO" into four parts, namely the Beginning, Development, Climax, and Ending. The research starts from the plots of these four parts, combined with the use of lens language in each part and certain character dialogue content to analyze the

cultural dimensions in the film. Therefore, the six cultural dimensions involved in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory will be used for research and analysis, namely: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Feminity, Long-term versus Short-term, Indulgence versus Restraint.

**3.2 Research Materials**

There is only one case in this research, which is the Pixar animation film "COCO." It has created many internationally renowned achievements in terms of economic efficiency and cultural value by virtue of its fantasy storyline and superb animation production technology. The study of a movie requires a certain degree of organization, and the narrative time of a movie is a content that cannot be ignored, and it is also an important dimension for the analysis of an animation work.

The Pixar animation film "COCO" is dominated by the sequential development of time clues and follows the narrative structure model of "beginning-development-climax-ending." It pursues the interlocking plot and structure and a complete story ending. Therefore, this research divides the plot of the animated film "COCO" into four parts: "Beginning," "Development," "Climax" and "Ending." Each part will explain the plot of the story. The plot will be combined with the use of relevant lens language to analyze the embodiment of the cultural dimension in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, so as to understand the cultural value of "COCO" more deeply.

**3.3 Research Procedure**

Here are five steps constituted in this research:

The first step is to determine that the research objective is the Pixar animated film "COCO," and other films are not within the scope of this research.

In the second step, based on the linear narrative principle mentioned in "Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principle of Screenwritting" by Robert McKee (1997), the plot of the movie "COCO" is divided in four major parts, "Beginning," "Development," "Climax" and "Ending," with a certain plot explanation.

The third step is to select the relevant scenes that can reflect the focus of the plot based on the four major plots divided above.

The fourth step is to explore whether the story design of each part reflects the cultural dimensions mentioned in Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory by analyzing the above related lens language, character performance characteristics, dialogue, etc.

The fifth step is to summarize the cultural dimension of the Pixar animation film "COCO," whether it is related to Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Feminity, Long-term versus Short-term or Indulgence versus Restraint, and further highlight the cultural value of the film.

**3.4 Data collection**

The most important data of this research is the related plots and important scenes

of the Beginning, Development, Climax, and Ending of the movie "COCO" because they can reflect the relationship with the six cultural dimensions of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory.

Table3.1: Classification and coding of collected data required for the four major plots of the animated film "COCO":

| Timeline of the Story | Background of the Story | The important roles in the film | The important language in the film |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Beginning | Time | Character | • Dialogues |
| • Development | • During the Day of the Dead | • Miguel | • Soliloquy |
| • Climate | Location | • Hector | • Narration |
| • Ending | • The Real World | • Ernesto de la Cruz | |
| | • The World of the Dead | • Grandma | |
| | • Other specific places Plot | • Coco | |
| | • Who, What, Where, When, Why | • Imelda | |

The above content will be analyzed in detail based on the beginning, development, climax, and ending of the film, combined with corresponding roles and important lens language, that is text decoding.

## 3.5 Textual Analysis

According to the above research design steps and data collection, this study makes a textual analysis of Pixar animated film "COCO," trying to explore six cultural dimensions in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. The textual analysis method is as follows:

1. Extract the important plots of the beginning, development, climax and ending of the film "COCO" to describe;

2. Research on the background, important roles, and important language content involved in the above four parts of the plot;

3. Analyze the relevant characters and dialogue in the plot, understand the meaning, and discover the embodiment of the film "COCO" in the cultural dimensions;

4. Summarize the cultural dimensions embodied in the film "COCO," including Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Feminity, Long-term versus Short-term or Indulgence versus Restraint. The Beginning, Development, Climax, and Ending of the film story will use key plot pictures and important character dialogues to combine and analyze the

manifestation of cultural dimensions, and are equipped with a certain storyline explanation.

The main basis for the study of cultural dimensions in this research is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. The theoretical explanation of its six cultural dimensions is an important support for textual analysis in this study. The following is the conceptual framework of this research in Figure 3.1

Figure 3.1: The Conceptual Framework of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory in this research
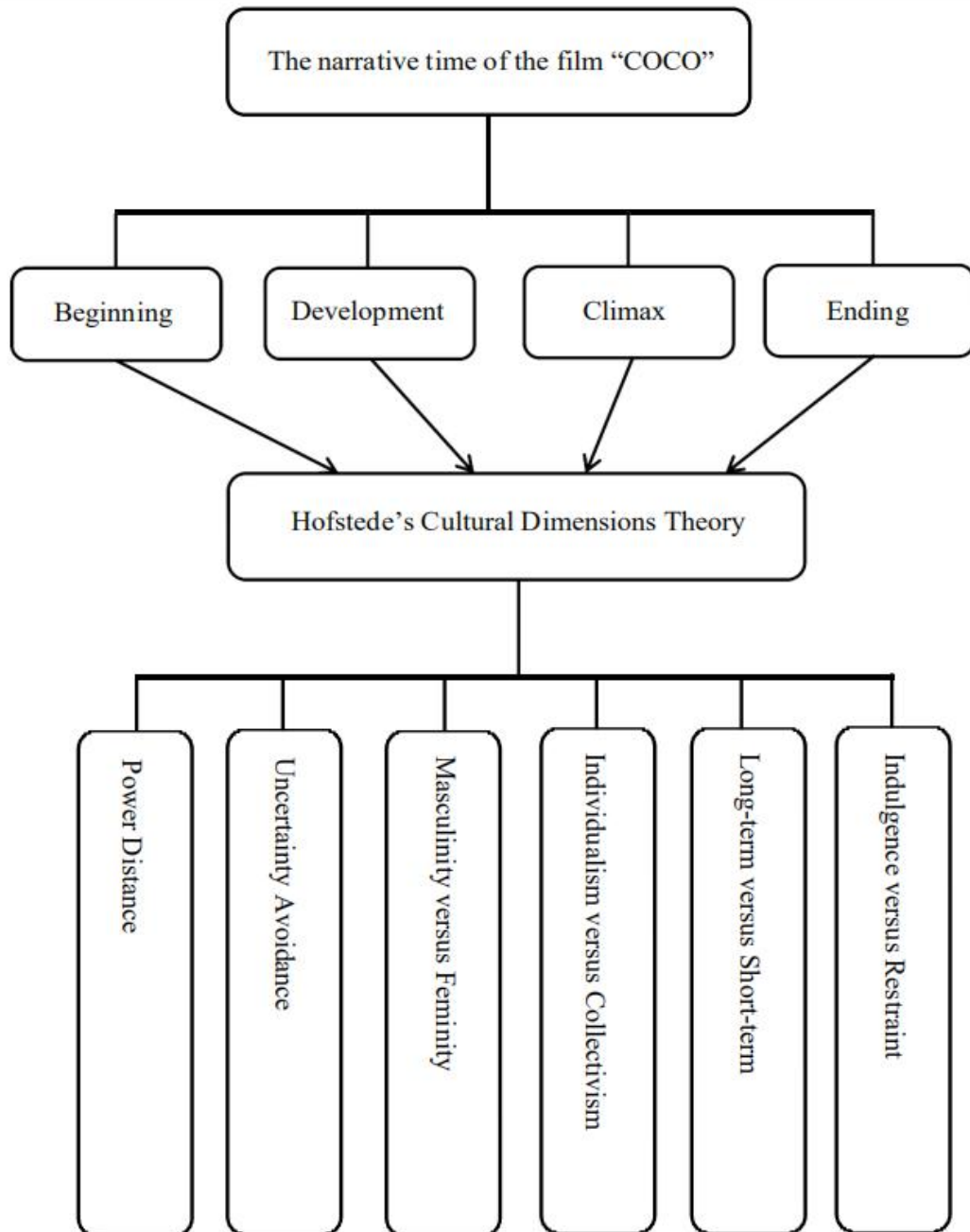
**3.6 Reliability, Validity of the Research**

Reliability concerns the ability of different researchers to make the same observations of a given phenomenon. The iterative process of qualitative research is data collection - reflection - analysis. The research needs to participate as data collector, record the key information or codebook, then analyzing the concepts and terms.

In qualitative research, validity concerns the degree to which a finding is judged to have been interpreted in a correct way. Geertz (1973) referred that behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness because it is through the flow of behavior - or more precisely, social action - that cultural forms find articulation.
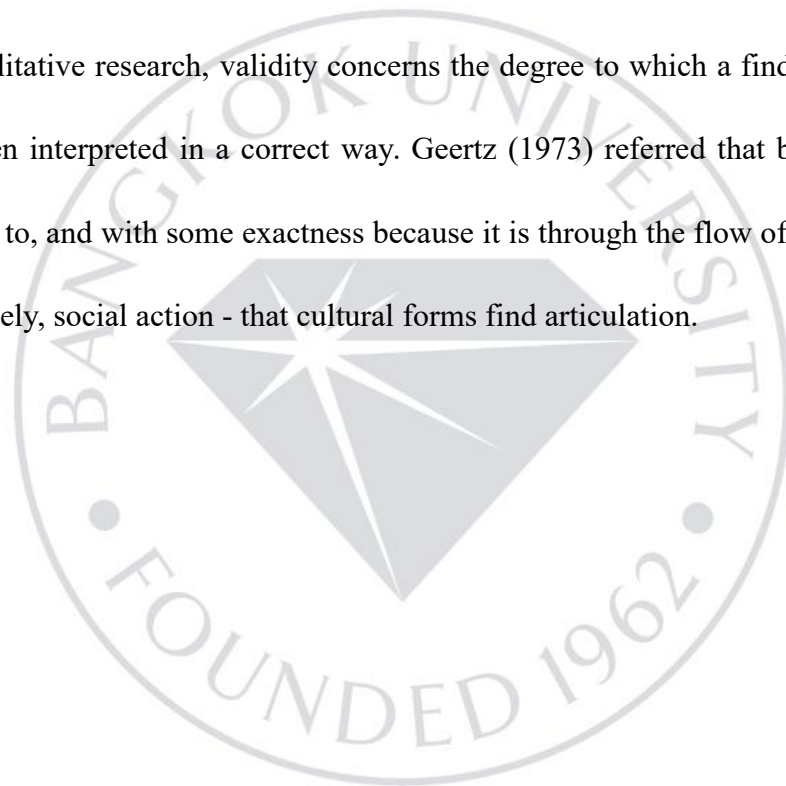
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter carefully described the embodiment of the cultural dimension of the film based on the narrative time of the Pixar animated film "COCO". The researcher combined the plot of the film with the language of the lens, and analyzed the reflection of different cultural dimensions in the film through textual analysis to answer research questions and achieve research goals. The cultural dimensions involved are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Feminity, Long-term versus Short-term or Indulgence versus Restraint in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory.

**4.1 Finding in the Beginning of the animated film "COCO"**

The film uses Mexico's Day of the Dead as its story background and explains his family background from the protagonist's first-person perspective: The protagonist Miguel's great-great-grandfather left his family for pursuing music dreams, and his family banned everything about music. Miguel's great-great-grandmother passed her shoemaking skills to generation after generation, and made shoemaking to be a family business. Her bravery and decisiveness has also been respected by generations to come.

But Miguel has a musical dream and he admires Ernesto de la Cruz, the greatest musician. Miguel mistakenly believed that Ernesto de la Cruz was his great-great-grandfather because of an invisible picture with Ernesto de la Cruz's guitar.

He also decided to take part in the music competition on the night of the Day of the

Dead despite the opposition of his family, but accidentally stepped into the "World of

the Dead" because he stole Ernesto de la Cruz's guitar. Miguel met Hector when he

met the dead relatives, a down-and-out homeless man who couldn't go back to the real

world on the Day of the Dead because no one remembers him.

Table 4.1: Important characters and dialogue at the beginning of the film "COCO"

| Background | Important characters | Miguel's grandmother's Dialogue |
|---|---|---|
| • The Day of the Dead <br><br> • The real world <br><br> • Miguel wanted to participate in a musical performance in the square, but was opposed by grandmother. | • Miguel <br><br> • Miguel's grandmother | • "It's Dia de los Muertos *(the Day of the Dead)*, no one's going anywhere. Tonight is about family." <br><br> • "Dia de los Muertos is the one night of the year our ancestors can come visit us. We've put their photos on the ofrenda *(altar)*, so their spirits can cross over. That is very important" <br><br> • "You are a Rivera *(The protagonist's family name)*. And a Rivera is A shoemaker. Through and through." |

Figure 4.1: The door of the protagonist's house: "Rivera family shoe factory, started in 1921"



Figure 4.2: The photos on the Miguel family altar are placed high and low according to seniority
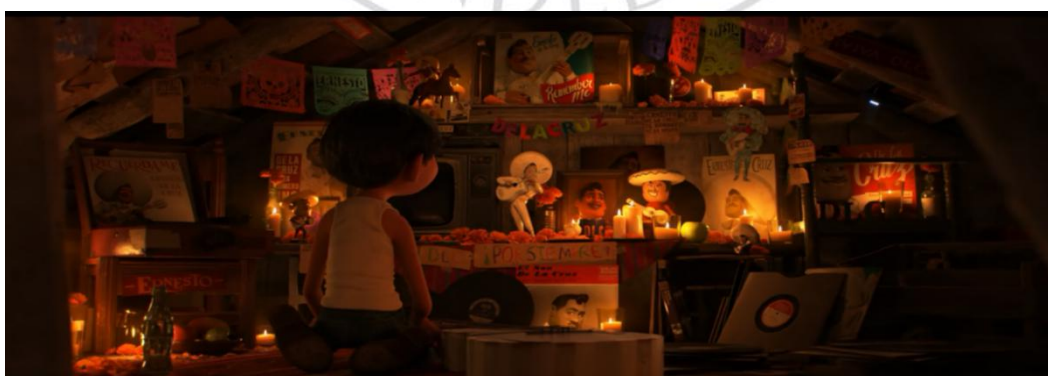


Figure 4.3: Because the family bans music, Miguel can only have a music corner that no one knows.

Figure 4.4: Miguel's grandmother broke his guitar when knowing about his music dream

From the beginning of the film "COCO," it can be known that the protagonist Miguel's family has a shoemaking business that has been passed down through generations (Figure 4.1), and no one violated the family's prohibition of music. This relatively strong family relationship and people's loyalty to family groups can reflect a strong collectivism dimension. Miguel's grandmother emphasizes the importance of reunion on the Day of the Dead (Table 4.1), which is also the film's design of collectivist culture. In addition, the photos of the altar in Miguel's house are placed according to their seniority (Figure 4.2), and Miguel is afraid of being blamed by the elders and dare not speak out his musical dreams (Figure 4.3). His grandmother broke his guitar after knowing about his music dream (Figure 4.4). These can also reflect a higher power distance.

**4.2 Finding in the Development of the animated film "COCO"**

The film began to enter the development stage when Miguel accidentally learned that the tramp Hector knew Ernesto de la Cruz. He hoped that Hector would take him

to see Ernesto de la Cruz, and get the blessing from him that Miguel mistakenly thought was "great-great-grandfather," so they started looking for Ernesto de la Cruz in the world of the dead. In order to get the chance to meet Ernesto de la Cruz, Miguel and Hector plan to participate in a music competition in the world of the dead, and because of the need to borrow a guitar, they came to the tramps' home in the world of the dead. These people were homeless because they were not memorized by the world, no one remembered them. And Miguel also encountered the "final death" of the homeless Cheech.

Table 4.2: Important characters and dialogue at the development of the film "COCO"

| Background | Important character | Hector's Dialogue |
|---|---|---|
| • The night of "the Day of the Dead" <br><br> • In the "World of the Dead" <br><br> • Miguel met Hector | • Hector | • "When there's no one left in the living world, who remembers you...you disappear from this world. We call it the final death." |

Figure 4.5: The final death of the homeless Cheech



Figure 4.6: The design of the World of the Dead where homeless people living



Figure 4.7: The design of the World of the Dead where common citizen living

In the plot of the development stage of the film "COCO," the most important thing is the "final death" that the film shows us. The audiences can learn the culture from Mexico's Day of the Dead in the film that the dead people actually continue to live in the "World of the Dead". If no one in the world remembers, it will usher in "final death" and truly disappear from this world (Figure 4.5). In addition, by comparing the homes of homeless people (Figure 4.6) and ordinary citizens in the World of the Dead (Figure 4.7), it can be found that there are also hierarchical situations in the World of the Dead. This is also the embodiment of the high Power Distance dimension in the film, which is a reflection of social unfairness.

**4.3 Finding in the Climax of the animated film "COCO"**

After the music competition, in order to escape the search of great-great-grandmother Imelda and other relatives, Miguel secretly lurked among other performing bands, came to the party of Ernesto de la Cruz, and "recognized" with Ernesto de la Cruz as he wished. When Miguel was immersed in the luxurious party of Ernesto de la Cruz, he was suddenly interrupted by Hector. Miguel also learned an amazing thing from it:

Ernesto de la Cruz and Hector used to be a pair of music partners and Hector had excellent musical talents. At the end of one of their roadshows, Hector chose to quit because he missed his family. Ernesto de la Cruz was afraid that he would not be able to rely on Hector's music creation and lose his reputation, so he chose to kill Hector through poisoned alcohol. Ernesto de la Cruz has since sung Hector's music, and has

achieved greater and greater success. Hector was mistaken by his family for running away from home for pursuing his dream.

At this point Miguel learned that Hector was his real great-great-grandfather, and they decided to expose the crime of Ernesto de la Cruz. Miguel and his family broke into the Ernesto de la Cruz grand concert, and showed the evil side of Ernesto de la Cruz to all the audience through a video camera. Finally, Ernesto de la Cruz was captured by Alebrijes (spirit creatures) and hit a big clock and died. At that time, Hector was also facing "final death," because the only one who remembers his daughter Coco, that is, Miguel's great grandmother, has a memory decline due to old age and gradually forgets Hector. Miguel needs to come back to the real world and helps mama Coco remember Hector.

Table 4.3: Important characters and dialogue at the Climax of the film "COCO"

| Background | Important characters | Dialogue between Miguel and Ernesto de la Cruz |
|---|---|---|
| • The night of "the Day of the Dead"<br><br>• In the "World of the Dead"<br><br>•The building where Ernesto de la Cruz hosts the party and concert | • Miguel<br><br>• Ernesto de la Cruz | • "You are a coward!"*(Miguel)*<br><br>• "I am Ernesto de la Cruz. The greatest musician of all the time."*(Ernesto de la Cruz)*<br><br>• "Hector is a real musician. You just the guy who murdered him |

| | | and stole his songs!"*(Miguel)* |
|---|---|---|
| | | • "Murdered? I am the one who's willing to do what it takes to seize my moment. Whatever it takes." *(Ernesto de la Cruz)* |

(continued)



Figure 4.8: The one torn off in the photo is Hector instead of Ernesto de la Cruz



Figure 4.9: Ernesto de la Cruz trying to kill Miguel

Figure 4.10: The crime of Ernesto de la Cruz was broadcast live on stage
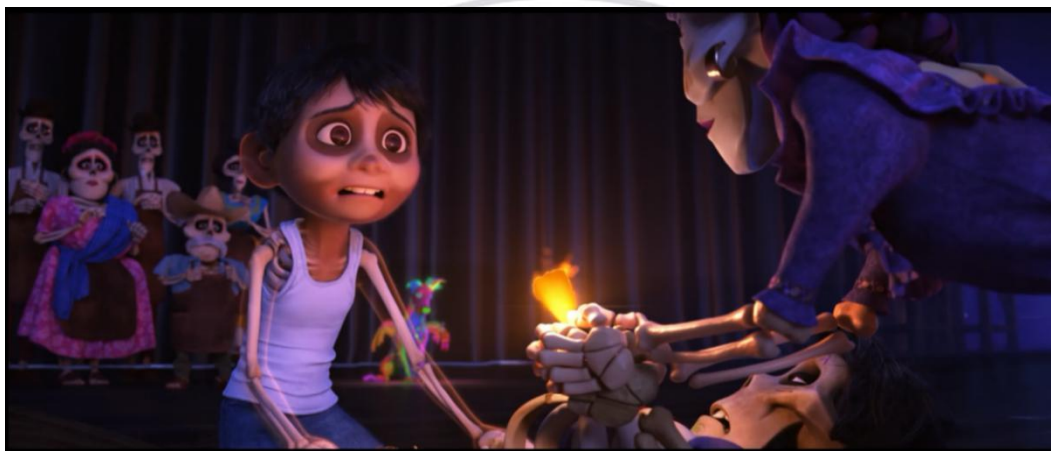


Figure 4.11: Hector faced final death and asked Miguel to return to the real world with the family blessing

The climax of this movie is undoubted that the audience discovers that Hector is not only Miguel's great-great-grand father (Figure 4.8), but also a talented musician. And the beloved Ernesto de la Cruz is just a hypocrite, knowing that Miguel knew the truth and tried to kill him (Figure 4.9), but did not know that his performance was exposed to the public (Figure 4.10). The design of this part makes the story ups and downs and makes the audience full of excitement. Esto de la Cruz has repeatedly emphasized that he is willing to pay all costs for success. This kind of behavior that

focuses only on himself and puts personal interests at the top is obvious individualism (Table 4.3). On the contrary, both Miguel and Hector showed strong "family first" collectivism, focusing on family. When Hector died, he only wanted to send Miguel back to the world (Figure 4.11). The film "COCO" is precisely through this distinctive character behavior and straightforward lines that make different cultural dimensions obvious and reduce cultural transmission barriers.

**4.4 Finding in the ending of the plot of the animated film "COCO"**

After returning to the real world, Miguel hurried to find his great grandmother Coco, trying to make her remember her father Hector, but Coco did not respond. Miguel suddenly remembered the song "Remember Me" written by Hector for Coco, and Coco was awakened by his singing and playing. Coco also took out the photos of Hector she had collected for many years, and told everyone about her childhood, so that all the family members present were moved by this late love.

Before the film ended, the scene was switched to the Day of the Dead a year later. Miguel's family has also returned to music since then. They sing happily on the Day of the Dead. Although they can no longer see their dead relatives, they always believe that the family is together.

Table 4.4: Important characters and dialogue at the Ending of the film "COCO"

| Background | Important characters | Dialogue between Miguel and Coco |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • The second day of the Day of the Dead<br><br>• In the real world<br><br>• Miguel's home | • Miguel<br><br>• Coco | • "Your papa loved you so much." *(Miguel)*<br><br>• "papa was a musician. When I was a little girl, he and mama would sing such beautiful songs." *(Coco)*<br><br>• "There aren't just old picture, they're our family, and they're counting on us to remember them." *(Miguel)* |

(continued)



Figure 4.12: Miguel tries to remind Coco of her dad Hector

Figure 4.13: Miguel played Hector's song "Remember Me" for Coco, awakening

Coco's memory



Figure 4.14: Miguel's great-great-grandfather Hector, great-great-grandmother Imelda,

great-grandmother Coco



Figure 4.15: Hector can finally be reunited with his daughter Coco in the world of the

dead

Figure 4.16: Miguel's family goes back to the real world hand in hand



Figure 4.17: The Miguel family reunited on the Day of the Dead, full of joy

The ending of the film "COCO" is undoubtedly the most moving, because family affection is a kind of emotion that does not need to be explained. It is our innate love that can resonate with audiences of different cultural backgrounds. The most moving part of the film is that when Coco died, Miguel awakened her memory through a song "Remember Me" created for Coco by Hector (Figure 4.12 & Figure 4.13). The original torn photos are also stitched back together (Figure 4.14), so that Hector could continue to "survive" in the world of the dead, and finally reunited with his daughter Coco (Figure 4.15). In the final part of the film, whether it is the undead hand in hand on the bridge leading to the real world (Figure 4.16) or their entire family gathering

together (Figure 4.17), they are constantly emphasizing collectivism. In front of the family altar, Miguel introduced photos of relatives on the altar to his little sister and emphasized that they must always remember them (Table 4.4), because Miguel knew that only the world remembered the deceased, they can continue to live in the world of the dead. The film's special treatment of death is also a manifestation of the long-term orientation of the cultural dimension because people pursue this kind of missed emotion. Just as we commemorate the dead relatives and friends, let them live in our hearts forever, and pass this memory on at the same time.

**4.5 Finding in the cultural dimensions of the film "COCO"**

After the above story analysis of the four parts of the film "COCO," including the performance and dialogue of important characters, we can find the following design manifestations of the six cultural dimensions in Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory.

Table 4.5: The cultural dimensions in the story design of the film "COCO"

| Cultural Dimensions | Event in the film |
|---|---|
| Power Distance:<br><br>It can be used to express people's acceptance of the unequal distribution of power in organizations, and to a large | • Miguel's grandmother has a high authority to speak at family, and family members must abide by the family rules - music is prohibited. |

| extent shows the authority of power distance. Power distance can be divided into high and low points, which can be expressed by the PDI (Power distance index). | • The world of dead is as hierarchical as the real world, celebrities live glamorously, but tramps live in utter decline. |
|---|---|
| Uncertainty Avoidance:<br><br>It refers to whether individuals and society are affected by uncertain events or unconventional environmental effects, whether they will avoid and control uncertainty through formal channels. Uncertainty avoidance can also be expressed by UAI (Uncertainty Avoidance Index). | • Miguel doesn't dare to express his musical dreams because he is afraid of breaking the family's rules and destroying the family relationship. |
| Individualism versus Collectivism:<br><br>It indicates the degree of association between individuals and groups. The culture of individualism focuses on individual goals and pays attention to oneself. On the contrary, collectivist | • The members of the Miguel family are closely connected and care about each other.<br><br>• The story design of the film runs through the theme of "family," emphasizing family is the most important thing many times. |

| culture emphasizes collective goals. | |
|---|---|
| Masculinity versus Feminity:<br><br>It mainly depends on whether a society represents more man's qualities (such as competitiveness) or woman's qualities (such as tenderness and consideration), and the definition of the functions of men and women (Hofstede, G, 1980). | • Miguel's family caring for each other, taking care of each other, tolerating Miguel's mistakes, etc. |
| Long-term versus Short-term Orientation:<br><br>It refers to the degree to which members of a certain culture can accept the delay in satisfying their material, emotional, and social needs (Hofstede, G, 1980). | • Placing photos of ancestors on the altar to let future generations remember them and extending family memories; at the same time, ancestors can come back to reunite on the Day of the Dead because their relatives remember them. |
| Indulgence versus Restraint:<br><br>It refers to a society's basic human needs and the allowable degree of enjoying life (Hofstede, 1980) | • Whether it is the real world or the undead world, there are competitions, parties, holiday celebrations, etc., people can easily get the joy of life and enjoy life |

Combining the above data analysis and finding, the researcher can generally study the cultural dimension embodied in the film "COCO" as follows:

• High Power Distance

• High Uncertainty Avoidance

• Collectivism

• Feminity

• Long-term Orientation

• Indulgence

Therefore, the six cultural dimensions in the film "COCO" and Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory are related, and the corresponding dimensions can be found in the movie plot design. This research will be further summarized in Chapter 5.

# CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Through the content of the above research and analysis, it can be found that animated films can well integrate the cultural consciousness of a country, and can reflect certain theoretical significance. The success of an animation is inseparable from all aspects, not only the technology. This chapter is the summary of this research. It is hoped that the following research and thinking results can provide some strategies for the development of Chinese animated film.

### 5.1 Summary and Conclusion

This research is developed around a research question: By analyzing the narrative mode of the Pixar animated film "COCO," which cultural dimensions are found in this film?

Through the explanation of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, the purpose of this research is to explore whether the six dimensions of the theory are reflected in the animated film "COCO", namely: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity versus Feminity, Individuals versus Collectivism, Long-term versus Short-term Orientation, Indulgence versus Restraint. From the Chapter 4 Findings section above, by analyzing the important shots and character dialogues of Beginning, Development, Climax, Ending in the film "COCO", the research results are: High Power distance, High Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Feminity, Long-term Orientation, Indulgence are found in the film "COCO".

**5.2 Discussion**

Whether an animated film can clearly and accurately express its cultural value and theoretical significance or not, it is inseparable from its narrative expression. The following are the narrative expression strategies of the animated film "COCO": the difference in audience positioning, the image of film, and discourse construction.

The first is the difference in audience positioning. When targeting children, the main audience, the Pixar creative team focused on downplaying the horror in the film, and interpreted the Day of the Dead with a relaxed and happy tone. For example, a lot of warm colors are used for the depiction of the "World of the Dead" in the film, and the bustling scene can also reduce the atmosphere of terror; The image design of skulls is also based on cuteness, and colorful facial tattoos are added to improve children's acceptance of "skeletons." At the same time, the theme of pursuing dreams and caring for the family in the film is closely related to adults, and many people can find their past or future in the film. The United States and Japan put forward the concept of "animation of adulthood" very early. In this new media era, the audience of movies has become wider and wider, and movies have become consumer products for daily leisure and entertainment. The production of animated films suitable for all ages must take into account the viewing needs of audiences of different ages and levels.

Second is the image of film and television. Film images are stereotyped character images that have been presented in works. Film works can portray characters more delicately and truthfully with their visual communication advantages.

Characterization is also the basis for high-quality animation and animation brand derivation. In terms of character setting, Pixar animator Mark Welsh talked about the "character arc", that is, at the end of the movie, the character characteristics or character defects must be different from the original situation. For example, when Hector first appeared in the film, he was a ragged homeless man who turned away from his family. At the end, he turned to a musical talent who missed his family and was misunderstood for many years. The process of reversing the character's image through the development of the story plot is very smooth, reflecting Pixar's natural and delicate technical ability to portray characters.

Finally, there is discourse construction. In terms of narrative methods, text is often plain, while movies can combine multiple art forms such as sounds, pictures, and special effects, and the effects they present are often more diverse. For example, the film's title uses the paper-cutting full of Mexican customs and culture, in a form similar to a stage play, supplemented by the protagonist Miguel's narration, to clearly express the contradictory origins of the Miguel's family and music. At the same time, Pixar pays great attention to details. When describing that great-great-grandfather abandoned his family because of pursuing his dream, the background music changed from joy to sadness, and the tone of the picture was also darkened.

The theme of the film "COCO" revolves around family and dreams. From the beginning of the film, the protagonist Miguel confronted the family because he liked music. After entering the "World of the Dead," he began to grow up, overcome various difficulties, resolve conflicts, and finally reunited with his family. Although

the main line of the film story is simple and easy to understand, it is full of innovation

in creation, which is also the part of this research that needs to be summarized.

**5.3 Implication of Findings**

In the above research and analysis, the researcher found that the Pixar animated

film "COCO" can reflect the six cultural dimensions of Hofstede's Cultural

Dimensions theory. Also, different cultural dimensions can actually be reflected in

different cultures and societies. As an important carrier of cultural output, films play a

very important role in the process of a country's cultural spread. Through the

exploration of cultural dimensions in this research, the researcher hopes to enhance

cross-cultural communication and reduce cultural barriers from the following three

aspects.

5.3.1 For Audience

The audience is the most direct information receiver of a film work. Whether

they understand and accept the culture conveyed by the film or not, it is an important

reason for the success of a film. In the film "COCO," the audiences can judge the

social culture presented by the film through the simple plot, although the audience

may not necessarily have studied Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. For

example, the grandma of the protagonist Miguel has high power in the family, and all

family members will obey her. Such a clearly divided level can make viewers in

China and Japan feel the same because both China and Japan are countries of High

Power Distance; Meanwhile American audiences may not understand this kind of

oppression from the family because they are in a low power distance society, even if they are working by their bosses, they can directly call each other's names. Therefore, for the audience, if the cultural dimension of the society they live in is consistent with that conveyed by the film, it can enhance their cultural identity and reduce the barriers of cross-cultural communication to a certain extent.

5.3.2 For Filmmaker

A successful film work is not about adapting film themes to different filmmakers, but filmmakers adapting to different film themes. Pixar is an American animation film studio, but the film "COCO" is centered around the Mexican culture, and then it was shown all over the world. When Pixar created "COCO," in order to prevent any cultural misunderstandings, director Lee Unkrich led the team to do a lot of research on the Day of the Dead to ensure the accuracy of every cultural detail in the film. For example, the protagonist Miguel always has a puppy next to him because in the Day of the Dead, the dog is a must exist. Only when filmmakers make sufficient preparations in the early stages of production, the storyline and the real external environment can be integrated during the production process.

5.3.3 For Researcher

At this stage, most of the research on the Pixar animated film "COCO" is based on a cross-cultural perspective, studying the film's cross-cultural strategies, music, and cultural elements and so on. For other animated films such as Disney and Dream Works, there are very few analyses from a cultural perspective. This research is based

on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory to analyze the manifestations of different cultural dimensions in animated films, hoping to provide some feasible research references for researchers who are interested in cultural dimensions.

**5.4 Limitation of the Study**

On the one hand, this research uses Pixar's animated film "COCO" as a research case. For ensuring the research reliability and validity, the researcher collected, classified, encoded, and decoded the four major plots and lens language of the beginning, development, climax and end of the film. Due to the limited time, this research only divides the research part according to the narrative time of the film "COCO," but the use of film colors, music or other perspective is not within the scope of the research. Therefore, more scholars can supplement the research of this film in the future.

On the other hand, this research is based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory for analysis, other theories are not used. Like Genette's narrative theory, Genette (1990: 6) defined "Narrative" in Narrative Discourse as a text or discourse that tells one thing or multiple things. Other researchers can analyze the animated film "COCO" from the perspective of narratology. For example, Symbolic Interaction Theory, researchers can explore the relationship between cultural symbols and social interaction in the animated film "COCO." Also, the high-low-context culture dimension referred by Edward·T·Hall (1976), researchers can explore the different effects of the film in the dissemination of high-context cultural countries (such as

China and Japan) and low-context cultural countries (such as the United States). There are also many related theories that can be applied to film research. This research does not provide additional theoretical explanations.

In addition, this research only represents the Pixar animated film "COCO." Since other films are not within the scope of this research, it cannot represent the situation of other films. The researcher hopes more scholars can add more in the future.

## 5.5 Suggestion for the Future Research

As an important carrier of cultural output, film plays a very important role in the process of a country's cultural spread. The researcher is from China, and China is becoming more and more important in the world today. The researcher hopes that through research and analysis of the cultural dimension of Pixar animated film "COCO," it can provide some inspiration for the dissemination of Chinese animation films.

5.5.1 For the creative thinking of the film story

The success of Pixar animated film "COCO" provides an example worth learning for film creation, that is, on the basis of keeping the simple story line and through the clear story narrative logic, the Mexican Day of the Dead culture becomes one thing that the audience can understand and accept easily. Under the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture for many years, "death" is a sensitive and solemn topic, and most people will avoid it. Pixar cleverly designed a dreamy world of the dead and

the cute skeletons through the culture of the Mexican Day of the Dead, breaking the horrible atmosphere of death in the eyes of the audience. Such innovative thinking and techniques can be used flexibly in any era and any kind of script adaptation. Pixar evolved the "World of the Dead" into the second world after human death, where the soul continues to live. At the same time, the concept of "death is not the end, but the start of another world" is introduced to the audience, making it easy for the audience to understand and accept, and breaking the barriers of different cultural transmission. Chinese animated films need such innovative capabilities to increase the possibility of domestic animation creation.

5.5.2 For film narrative mode

On the one hand, the animated film "COCO" uses a consistent linear narrative model from the perspective of narrative time, which is the timeline of "Beginning, Development, Climax, Ending" based on this research. The film divides the whole story into two major scenes: the real world and the world of the dead. The story narration is completed through repeated transitions between the protagonist Miguel in these two scenes. In the beginning of the real world scene, the audience can learn that the protagonist Miguel was in conflict with his family because of his music dream. After he had no intention of stepping into the world of the dead, the film started to promote the development of the plot. At the climax of the film, it shows how Miguel balances dreams and family affection, and finally returns to the real world and resolves conflicts with his family. The two main story scenes are synchronized on the same timeline, so that the narrative process of the whole film has a clear structure and

rhythm. On the other hand, the animated film "COCO" adopts a transparent narrative method, allowing the audience to easily substitute their own emotions into the protagonist's psychology and life situation, thereby generating a sense of identity. In the film "COCO," Miguel's situation of balancing family and dreams is a microcosm of many people's lives in reality, and death is an inevitable process for everyone. The film's depiction of family elements and the reinterpretation of death. This transparent narrative method reminds many viewers of their loved ones who have passed away, and their hearts are touched. And moreover, film's depiction of family elements and reinterpretation of death reminded many audiences of their departed relatives, and their hearts were touched.

5.5.3 For cultural awareness and sensitivity

Pixar's production of "COCO" took up to 6 years, including a three-year survey of Mexican cultural background, which laid a solid foundation for the Mexican cultural ideology presented in this animated film. China has a wealth of literary resources and five thousand years of historical and cultural precipitation, providing inexhaustible good themes for animation creation. From the 1960s to 1970s, Chinese animated films began to adapt classic literary works, such as "Journey to the West" and "Nezha Troubles the Sea." Subsequently, the Chinese animation market began to be impacted by high-tech and highly entertaining 3D animated films represented by Japan, Europe and the United States. Domestic animated film began to expose shortcomings such as insufficient technology and insufficient innovation capabilities. Domestic animated film urgently needs to learn from Pixar's ability to incorporate

unfamiliar cultural ideologies into films, and to allow audiences of different cultural backgrounds to accept it. If domestic animation wants to create a successful work, it must combine modern technology with local culture in order to export oriental aesthetics and traditional Chinese culture to the world.

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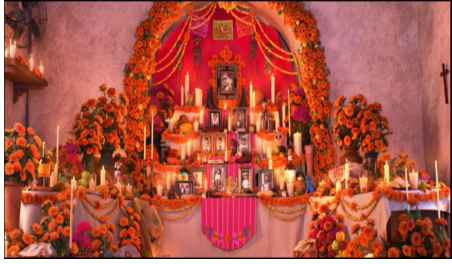
**APPENDIX**

Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the story design of the Pixar animated film "COCO"

| Cultural Dimensions | Event in the film | Related story |
|---|---|---|
| **Power Distance:**<br><br>It can be used to express people's acceptance of the unequal distribution of power in organizations, and to a large extent shows the authority of power distance. Power distance can be divided into high and low points, which can be expressed by the PDI (Power distance index). | • Miguel's grandmother has a high authority to speak at family, and family members must abide by the family rules - music is prohibited.<br><br>• The world of dead is as hierarchical as the real world, celebrities live glamorously, but tramps live in utter decline. | <br><br>• Miguel's grandmother broke his guitar when knowing about his music dream.<br><br><br><br><br>• The design of the World of the Dead where homeless people and common citizen living. |
| **Uncertainty** | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Avoidance:**<br><br>It refers to whether individuals and society are affected by uncertain events or unconventional environmental effects, whether they will avoid and control uncertainty through formal channels. Uncertainty avoidance can also be expressed by UAI (Uncertainty Avoidance Index). | •Miguel doesn't dare to express his musical dreams because he is afraid of breaking the family's rules and destroying the family relationship. | <br><br>• Because Miguel's family bans music, Miguel can only have a music corner that no one knows. |
| **Individualism versus Collectivism:**<br><br>It indicates the degree of association between individuals and groups. The culture of | • The members of the Miguel's family are closely connected and care about each other.<br><br>• The story design of the film runs through | <br><br>• Miguel's family goes back to the real world hand in hand on the |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| individualism focuses on individual goals and pays attention to oneself. On the contrary, collectivist culture emphasizes collective goals. | the theme of "family" emphasizing family is the most important thing many times. | Day of the Dead.  • The Miguel family reunited on the Day of the Dead, full of joy. |
| **Masculinity versus Feminity:** It mainly depends on whether a society represents more man's qualities (such as competitiveness) or woman's qualities (such as tenderness and consideration), and the definition of the functions of men and women (Hofstede, G, 1980). | •Miguel's family caring for each other, taking care of each other, tolerating Miguel's mistakes, etc. |  • Hector faced final death and asked Miguel to return to the real world with the family blessing. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Long-term versus Short-term Orientation:**<br><br>It refers to the degree to which members of a certain culture can accept the delay in satisfying their material, emotional, and social needs (Hofstede, G, 1980). | • Placing photos of ancestors on the altar to let future generations remember them and extending family memories; at the same time, ancestors can come back to reunite on the Day of the Dead because their relatives remember them. | <br><br>• "There aren't just old picture, they're our family, and they're counting on us to remember them." *(Miguel)* |
| **Indulgence versus Restraint:**<br><br>It refers to a society's basic human needs and the allowable degree of enjoying life (Hofstede, 1980) | • Whether it is the real world or the undead world, there are competitions, parties, holiday celebrations, etc., people can easily get the joy of life and enjoy life | |

(continued)

**BIODATA**

Name-Surname: Chen Yue

Address: Fuji Guangchang A6-2502, Binjiang Rd, Haizhu Distrrict, Guangzhou,

Guangdong Province, China.

Email: yuechen1@bumail.net

Contact Number: +86 15622322926

Educational Background: 2019-2020: Master of Communication Arts, Major in

Global Communication (International Program), Bangkok University

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Province __Guangdong_____ Postal Code __510260_____ being a Bangkok
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