Main Article

Danmu video as the resemiotised: An attitudinal analysis of *Home Visit*

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Abstract

Danmu has been gaining increasing popularity in Chinese video-sharing platforms where users can project their comments directly onto the original video. Its popularity resonates with the general trend where user-generated content plays an increasingly important role. This article investigates possible meaning-making shifts produced by *danmu* from the perspective of resemiotisation. By deploying the Appraisal framework, particularly the attitude system, this study examines the attitudinal meanings expressed in a video and its *danmu* version. Comparisons between the two sets of attitudinal meanings reveal two patterns of meaning-making shifts. One is a shift in perspective, that is from whose perspective a certain scenario is presented. The other is a shift in the characterisation of one participant in the video. These findings raise our awareness of the possible manipulation of meaning afforded by *danmu*, which allows viewers to contribute directly to the meaning making of the *danmu* video. *Danmu*'s enablement of viewers' co-production greatly extends the meaning and the meaning potential that could be afforded by the original video, which calls for a reconsideration of the purpose of video sharing, and the relationship between the original producer and viewers.

Keywords

Appraisal, attitude, Bilibili, *danmu*, resemiotisation, user-generated content

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Introduction

The advancement of communication technology has a profound influence on our lives. Not only do we communicate more frequently via the Internet, but also the ways we do things have changed considerably with the mediation of online platforms. Watching audio-visual products, for instance, has become increasingly interactive after the introduction of *danmu*, a commentary system where anonymous comments from viewers appear directly on the original video as scrolling messages. Since its adoption from Japan in the 2010s, *danmu* videos have quickly drawn a large audience in China. Its influence even extends to platforms which typically do not support *danmu*, as *danmu* enthusiasts develop plugins to enable *danmu* comments on platforms such as YouTube. The widespread popularity of *danmu* has attracted scholarly attention from various areas, including translation (Díaz-Cintas, 2018; Yang, 2020), linguistics (Hsiao, 2015; Zhang and Cassany, 2020), communication studies (Yin and Fung, 2017), Chinese studies (Cao, 2021; Chen, 2021), and computer science (Wang et al., 2021). The current study contributes to this emerging body of research by exploring *danmu* from a social semiotic perspective. Specifically, taking the short video *Home Visit* as an example, this study investigates how the *danmu* video resemiotises the attitude-associated meanings in the original video. This study can thereby raise our awareness of possible meaning shifts enabled by *danmu*, which may introduce meanings entirely unintended by the original video producer. The study can also enhance our understanding of the transposition of the relationship between the original video producer and viewers when *danmu* is enabled, where the boundary between the meaning maker and the meaning receiver is increasingly blurred.

Resemiotisation, according to Iedema (2003: 41), is concerned with 'how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next'. In this sense, adding *danmu* to the original video can be considered a resemiotisation process where meanings in the original video are interpreted, commented on, or represented by the massive anonymous comments which are synchronously posted onto the original video as it is playing. The meanings in the original video are thus destabilised. This resemiotisation enabled by *danmu* demonstrates a process in which the meanings in the original video are open to further negotiation. This is opposite to the resemiotisations discussed in Iedema (2001), where the meanings at stake are getting stabilised from one stage to the next, and becomes more and more difficult to change (cf. Ravelli et al., 2013).

The resemiotisation enabled by *danmu* is unique in two ways. First, it is not possible to separate the original video from the *danmu* video, as the former is necessarily embedded in the latter. This is different from the resemiotisations examined so far: in previously examined resemiotisations, each stage of meaning making is separated from another, and it is relatively clear when a given stage starts and ends, whether it is from face-to-face communication to written text (Iedema, 2001), from written text to images (Bokek-Cohen, 2017) or audio-visual artefacts (Cimasko and Shin, 2017; Ravelli et al., 2013), or from live performance to film operas (Sindoni and Rossi, 2016). In contrast, the *danmu* video exists as a parasite of the original video, which means that the meanings resemiotised via *danmu* must have the original video serving as the backdrop.

Second, the *danmu* video cannot be regarded as finished because so far as the original video is available on the video streaming website and the *danmu* function is enabled, new comments can always be added to *danmu*, hence eventually changing the meaning making produced by the simultaneous presentation of the original video and *danmu*. That is to say, the meaning-making practice here involved is not merely of a linear nature but more of a cumulative nature, and there is theoretically no end to this process of cumulation, hence no end to the process of resemiotisation. As will be demonstrated in this paper, the ongoing process of resemiotisation enabled by *danmu* can further destabilise the meanings expressed in the original video. Thus, the current research on the resemiotisation from the original video to the *danmu* video can enhance our understanding of the semiotic affordances of *danmu* and the ensuing transposition of the relationship between the original producer and viewers when *danmu* is enabled.

In this paper we focus on interpersonal meanings, specifically attitudinal meanings. It might be expected that there are divergences in the attitudinal meanings presented in the original video and the *danmu* comments since video-streaming viewers can post anything (so far as the comments can pass internet censorship). However, it might be difficult to predict the patterns in the attitudinal meaning-making shifts, and it is not immediately apparent as to what the patterns could inform us about the resemiotisation process afforded by *danmu*. This study thus aims to explore how the social and interpersonal practice of video watching is transposed through the resemiotisation process enabled by *danmu* and also to raise our awareness of possible changes in meaning with *danmu* added to the original video. To this end, this paper seeks to investigate the following research questions: (1) What are the patterns of the attitudinal meaning shifts between the original subtitles and the *danmu* comments? (2) What insights do the shifts bring us into the resemiotisation enabled by *danmu*?

The research was conducted with a case study of the *danmu* video *Home Visit*. The analysis was carried out by deploying the Appraisal framework proposed by Martin and White (2005), with a particular focus on attitudinal meanings. Before moving to the analytical framework, we will first introduce *danmu* as an emerging real-time online commenting system. Then we will introduce the short video *Home Visit* and the analysis methods.

Danmu and its semiotic affordances

The *danmu* (literally bullet screen, also known as bullet curtain, bullet comment, bullet subtitle, barrage, or *danmaku* in Japanese; for more details of the terms, see e.g. Chen and Chen, 2020: 728) discussed in this study is from Bilibili, the most popular *danmu* video website in China. In this paper, the term '*danmu* comments' refers to the comments in *danmu*; '*danmu*' refers to the commenting system or the meaning-making group comprised of all the *danmu* comments in a given *danmu* video; '*danmu* video' refers to the video version with *danmu* comments (in contrast to 'the original video'). Below we focus on three features of *danmu* which are particularly pertinent to the current study (see Johnson, 2013 for other important features of *danmu*).

First, *danmu* writes directly into the original video rather than appearing in a comment section below the video (see Figure 1). The comments in *danmu* are synchronised to the

Figure 1. Screenshot of *Home Visit* with *danmu*.

playback time of the original video and are displayed at a specific position. The original video is, so to speak, resemiotised as it unfolds. This process of resemiotisation enabled by *danmu* is thus different from what has been examined so far, where the previous stage of practice is not or cannot be embedded in a later stage (e.g. Christensson, 2021; Fernández-Fontecha et al., 2019; Iedema, 2001, 2003; Kerfoot, 2011; Yu, 2020). The *danmu* comment can specify the point in the video on which it is intended to comment, which allows for detailed and (pseudo) real-time interaction rather than general impressions or reflections (Chen et al., 2017: 732). In other words, *danmu* comments are closely integrated into the meaning making of the video, which can ultimately resemiotise the original video.

Second, *danmu* comments are displayed without attribution or authorship, appearing as if they were part of the original video created by the original producer. This anonymity blurs the line between producers and viewers – the viewers who make *danmu* comments become co-producers of the *danmu* video. The comments can thus contribute more directly to the meaning making of the *danmu* video and, as will be shown in the current paper, can ultimately contribute to the resemiotisation of the original video and transpose video watching from a passive practice to an (inter)active one.

Third, *danmu* is presented in the foreground, blocking the content in the original video. This puts *danmu* in a visually salient position. Further increasing its salience is the feature that *danmu* comments are animated – they move from right to left across the screen by default (see Zhang and Cassany, 2020: 490 on other ways that *danmu* can appear). As the number of *danmu* comments increases, *danmu* can overwhelm the screen and become so intense that the meanings expressed in *danmu* overtake those expressed in the original video. *Danmu* thus plays a significant role in the meaning making of the *danmu* video and consequently in the resemiotisation of the original.

Given these features of *danmu*, this study explores possible meaning shifts introduced by *danmu*. It will also discuss the transposition of the relationship between the original video producer and viewers.

Data and methods

Data: Home Visit and its reception

Home Visit is an 8-minute video produced by a popular Bilibili uploader nicknamed The Diary of a Rural Teacher (乡村教师日记). The video's original title can be literally translated as 'I was sleeping then! The teacher suddenly comes to my home to check my homework' (当时我正在睡觉！老师突然上门检查作业), which is referred to as *Home Visit* in the current paper. The video uploader is a primary school teacher of maths. She uploads videos related to her daily work. The video under investigation shows the scenario of the teacher's home visit during a summer vacation. There are three participants in the scenario – the teacher, the student and the student's mother. The video unfolds with the dialogue between the teacher and the mother. The theme of their dialogue is centred around the student's homework, which is considered less than satisfactory. The student, though present, produced only two utterances throughout the video, and neither of the utterances is attitudinally charged. Therefore, by being almost entirely silent throughout the video, the student makes no attitudinal meaning via verbal language.

Uploaded on 10 August 2021, the video soon became the uploader's most viewed video – it has been played over 7.9 million times and received 32,109 *danmu* comments by 11 March 2022. The *danmu* comments are anonymous but heavily attitudinally charged. As will be reported in the following sections, the *danmu* comments go far beyond the teacher-and-mother dialogue as presented in the original video, offering the viewers an exceptional opportunity to co-produce new attitudinal meanings based on the meanings that have been synchronously played in the original video.

This study investigates the meaning-making shifts between the original video and its *danmu*, when the two are played simultaneously (see Figure 1, accessed 11 March 2022 from https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1hA411P7v2?spm_id_from=333.999.0.0). Particularly, we focus on the attitudinal meanings expressed in language, as the pictorial part in the original video remains the same in the *danmu* video. We attend to the subtitles of the dialogue in the original video and the *danmu* comments. There are altogether 102 lines of subtitles and 458 comments. There is a limit on the number of *danmu* comments that can be displayed in a given video, where new comments will replace old ones (see Zhang and Cassany, 2020 for more). The 458 comments under investigation were extracted on 22 January 2022 (see Yang, 2021 on how to extract *danmu* comments). Both the subtitles and the *danmu* comments are written in Chinese characters. We manually annotated the Appraisal values in the subtitles and comments (more details in the following section) and provided English translations of the Chinese texts in this paper.

Analytical framework: Attitude system in Appraisal

To unpack the potential shifts in attitudinal meaning from the original video to the video with *danmu*, this study adopted the attitude system in the Appraisal framework (Martin and White, 2005) for a systematic analysis of the subtitles and the *danmu* comments.

The Appraisal framework is an interpersonal meaning system informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (e.g. Halliday, 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). It offers a detailed account of evaluative language, where three categories of attitude are identified: affect, judgement and appreciation. Affect is concerned with emotions, including dis/
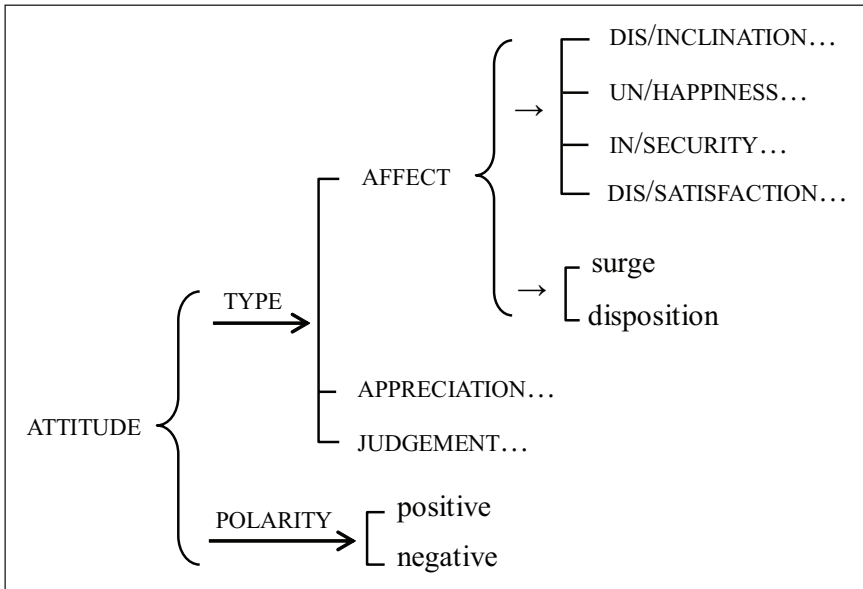
Figure 2. The basic system of attitude (adapted from Martin and White, 2005: 38, 45–58).

inclination, un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction. Another dimension in affect is concerned with whether the emotion is construed as a mental status (e.g. *He is sad*) or as an emotional surge with behavioural manifestation (e.g. *He is crying*). Judgement attends to the evaluation of people and their behaviour, which may or may not be considered admirable or praiseworthy. Appreciation deals with the evaluation of things, which may or may not be valued. As indicated, attitude is either positive or negative. The attitude system adopted for the current analysis is briefly outlined in Figure 2. Following the conventions in Systemic Functional Linguistics, the name of a system is written in small capitals; the square bracket indicates an either-or relation between the features, and the curly bracket indicates a both-and relation (see e.g. Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: ix–x).

In realisation, the evaluation may be expressed explicitly or implicitly. In the former case, it is 'inscribed', and the latter 'invoked'. Inscribed expressions are semantically stable in terms of the attitude conveyed. For instance, *scared* in *I'm so scared* inscribes a negative emotion of fear. The evaluation can be invoked in, say, *I must be in a dream*.

It needs to be re-emphasised that the attitude system is a meaning system. This means realisations of attitude can involve several lexicogrammatical systems across units of varying length, be it a word, a phrase/group, or a clause. While the framework itself does not require a unit of analysis, we found it would be helpful in revealing the attitudinal tendency in our data with a consistent unit of analysis (see Fuoli, 2018 on the issue arising from different unitisation choices). The unit we adopted is 'move', which is the basic unit of interpersonal meaning. A move (in exchange) is congruently realised by 'a clause selecting independently for mood' (Martin, 1992: 59). In our data, a move is most often co-extensive with a line of subtitle or a *danmu* comment (see Eggins and Slade, 1997:

186–189 on grammatical and prosodic criteria for move identification). Thus, choosing move as the unit of analysis is theoretically consistent with Appraisal and practically manageable (Xu, 2021: 52–53).

Besides tracking the type, polarity and explicitness of an attitude, we also recorded the Appraiser (i.e. *who* is evaluating?) and the Appraised (i.e. *what/who* is being evaluated?) of the attitude in the Appraisal analysis, or the Emoter and the Trigger in the case of affect. This annotation method allows us to systematically compare the attitudinal meanings in the original video and the *danmu* video along multiple axes. Accordingly, we annotated the Chinese subtitles and the *danmu* comments where possible. Two examples of the Appraisal annotation are illustrated in Table 1, with English translated by the authors of this article. (The Emoter and the Trigger in affect are treated as the Appraiser and the Appraised, respectively.)

The Appraisal analysis reveals two patterns of meaning-making shifts when the attitudinal meanings were resemiotised from the original video to the *danmu* video. One pattern concerns the perspective of attitudinal meaning making, and the other pattern is about the characterisation of persons/entities involved in the meaning-making practice. In the following sections, we will report our findings in terms of these two kinds of shifts and discuss the implications of the findings.

Shift in perspective: Teacher's perspective versus student's perspective

The first pattern revealed by our analysis is about the perspective when making meanings. Specifically, *danmu* can afford a change of perspective so that the scenario in the *danmu* video is primarily presented from a perspective that is different from that in the original. In the current case, we observed a shift from the teacher's perspective in the original to the student's perspective in the *danmu* video. In terms of attitude analysis, this shift of perspective is revealed in a change of the most prominent Appraisers/Emoters. Specifically, the teacher is the main Appraiser in the original video – 64% of the attitudinal instances in the original video are the teacher's subjective evaluation. No instance is of the student's attitudinal stance. In contrast, the student is intended as the main Appraiser in *danmu* – 65% of the attitudinal instances in *danmu* comments convey the student's attitudinal stance. Only one instance (out of 440) is about the teacher's attitude (see Table 2). While the teacher's assessments are still embedded in the *danmu* video, they are overwhelmed by the intensive comments in *danmu*, which are presented in the foreground. The *danmu* video is thus dominated by evaluations intended to be made by the student. That is to say, the *danmu* video resemiotises the original video's attitudinal perspective from teacher-centred to student-centred.

As a result of this shift in perspectives, different aspects of the scenario are highlighted in the original video and the *danmu* video. In terms of attitudinal meanings, the differences further involve the Appraised and the type of evaluation being made. Tables 3 and 4 summarise the attitude types and the Appraised in the teacher's evaluations in the original video and the student's evaluations in the *danmu* video respectively.

Table 1. Examples of attitude analysis of the subtitles and the *danmu* comments in *Home Visit*.

Source	Timestamp	Instance	Appraiser	Appraised	Type	Polarity	Explicitness
Subtitle	00:02:28,100– 00:02:29,267	你看他这字 写的都不认识 (Look at his handwriting. I cannot read it.)	Teacher	Child's handwriting	Appreciation	Negative	Invoked
Danmu	0:00:57.72– 0:01:05.72	段总: 生无可恋 (Manager Duan: desperate)	Child	Teacher's home visit	Affect	Negative	Inscribed

Table 2. Distribution of Appraisers in the subtitles and the *danmu* comments in *Home Visit.*

Source	Appraiser	No.	Percentage (%)
Subtitles	Teacher	78	64
	Mother	38	31
	Others	5	4
	Total	121	100
Danmu	Student	286	65
	Viewer	149	34
	Others	5	1
	Total	440	100

Table 3. Evaluations made by the teacher in the subtitles in *Home Visit.*

Attitude type and polarity	Appraised/Trigger	No.	Percentage (%)
Negative appreciation/ negative judgement	Student's homework	25	32
	Student's handwriting	21	27
	Others	7	9
Positive appreciation/ positive judgement	Student's homework	8	10
	Student's behaviour	5	6
	Others	4	5
Positive affect	Student's on-the-spot behaviour	5	6
	Mother's wording	3	4
Total		78	100

As can be seen from Table 3, the original video foregrounds the teacher's negative evaluations towards the student's homework and his handwriting. Below are some examples (inscribed expressions in bold). On a side note, as indicated in the annotations of Example 1 (as well as Example 7 and Example 8), many expressions in our data allow for multi-layer interpretations. That is, the wording can be interpreted as expressing an attitude of different categories (see also Thompson, 2014; Xu and White, 2021).

1. 你看这 他就是单位答都没写 (teacher's utterance in the original video)
   (Look here. There is no unit of measurement or 'Solution' in his answer.)
   [Attitude: negative appreciation; Appraiser: teacher; Appraised: quality of the student's homework; Explicitness: invoked]
   [Attitude: negative judgement; Appraiser: teacher; Appraised: student's homework behaviour; Explicitness: invoked]
2. 你看他这字 写的都不认识 (teacher's utterance in the original video)
   (Look at his handwriting. I cannot even read it.)
   [Attitude: negative appreciation; Appraiser: teacher; Appraised: student's handwriting; Explicitness: invoked]

Table 4. Evaluations made by the student in the *danmu* comments in *Home Visit*.

Attitude type and polarity	Appraised/Trigger	No.	Percentage (%)
Negative affect	Teacher's home visit	204	71
Negative judgement	Teacher	36	13
	Others	9	3
Negative appreciation	Teacher's home visit	16	6
Positive judgement	Self	11	4
	Other	1	0
Positive affect/positive appreciation	Various	9	3
Total		286	100

3. 你看你这字 写的都不行 (teacher's utterance in the original video)
   (Look at your handwriting. It is **poor**.)
   [Attitude: negative appreciation; Appraiser: teacher; Appraised: student's hand-writing; Explicitness: inscribed]

In contrast, the *danmu* comments are dominated by the student's negative affect triggered by the teacher's home visit (see Table 4) as exemplified below. In the examples (and others below), the student is often referred to as 'Manager Duan', which is a playful way to address a person. The student frequently appears in the teacher's videos and becomes very popular among the followers. His family name is Duan, and he is given the nickname 'Manager Duan' by the followers and viewers.

4. 段总：我的快乐没了 (comment in the *danmu*)
   (Manager Duan: My **happiness** is **gone**.)
   [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: student; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: inscribed]
5. 段总：生无可恋 (comment in the *danmu*)
   (Manager Duan: **Desperate**.)
   [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: child; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: inscribed]
6. 段总：我小手无处安放 (comment in the *danmu*)
   (Manager Duan: There is nowhere to place my little hands.)
   [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: student; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: invoked]

Notably, while it was the online viewers who posted the *danmu* comments, over 40% (178 out of 440) of the evaluations were intended to be made by the student (i.e. focaliser in literature; cf. metaperspective in Gillespie and Cornish, 2010). This is achieved by using *I* (我) to refer to the student rather than the viewers themselves (Examples 4 and 6) and/or by specifying the intended speaker (i.e. the student) at the beginning of the comments (Examples 4–6). The viewers are, so to speak, adding lines to the student so that

the silent student in the original video now becomes the most talkative participant in the *danmu* video. In this, the viewers explicitly position themselves as meaning-producers of the *danmu* video, rather than simply as meaning-receivers in the case of watching the original video. In other words, by enabling (pseudo-) synchronised comments, *danmu* also enables the transposition of the social and interpersonal practices of video watching (Iedema, 2001: 36). One possible manifestation of this transposition is the change of perspective in the presentation of a certain scenario. In the current case, the teacher's home visit is primarily presented from the teacher's perspective in the original video but from the student's perspective in the *danmu* video.

It needs to be noted though that the perspective foregrounded in the *danmu* video is subject to change. This is because new comments can always be posted and will replace previous ones once the number of comments reaches the upper limit that could be accommodated by a given video. The dynamic nature of this commenting system also means that it is not possible to predict whose perspective would be foregrounded in the *danmu* video during this ongoing process of commenting. It is possible, for example, that the online viewers' perspective would be foregrounded in the *danmu* video at a certain stage, highlighting their evaluations towards the video and/or the characters in the video (Examples 7–9).

7. 哈哈哈节目效果爆炸 (comment in the *danmu*)
   (**Hahaha**, this programme is a smash.)
   [Attitude: positive affect; Emoter: viewer; Trigger: video; Explicitness: inscribed]
   [Attitude: positive appreciation; Appraiser: viewer; Appraised: video; Explicitness: invoked]
8. 感谢段总为我送来的欢乐 (comment in the *danmu*)
   (Thank you Manager Duan for bringing me the **laughter**.)
   [Attitude: positive affect; Emoter: viewer; Trigger: student; Explicitness: inscribed]
   [Attitude: positive judgement; Appraiser: viewer; Appraised: student; Explicitness: invoked]
9. 这老师好负责 (comment in the *danmu*)
   (This teacher is very **responsible**.)
   [Attitude: positive judgement; Appraiser: viewer; Appraised: teacher; Explicitness: inscribed]

Such unpredictability regarding from whose perspective a given scenario will be presented may pose a challenge to the original video producer, who has no control over the *danmu* comments to be posted. On the other hand, the fact that the video producer chooses to upload the video in a *danmu*-enabled platform suggests that the purpose of the video sharing is not merely sharing the meaning intended by the producer – the producer chooses to invite viewers into the co-production. As a result, different viewers, and even the same viewer watching the video with *danmu* at different times, may encounter very different versions of *danmu*, thus having a very different understanding of the scenario and very different watching experiences.

Shift in characterisation: Silent student versus talkative student

Another pattern revealed by our analysis is that the resemiotisation from the original video to *danmu* video affords a change in the characterisation of the persons/entities involved in the meaning-making practice. In the current case of *Home Visit*, we found that the student is characterised differently in the original video and the *danmu* video. Specifically, the student is silent in the original video. Confronted with the overwhelmingly negative evaluations from the teacher and also from his mother, who echoes the teacher from time to time, the student never defends himself, nor does he ever attempt to. There is no verbal expression of attitude. However, the student's facial expression does reveal sadness, or negativity in general, which is expressed by his downward curved mouth corners (see Figure 1) (Feng and O'Halloran, 2012; Jing, 2021; Martinec, 2001; Tian, 2011). The student's sadness may also be revealed in the stillness of his facial expression and bodily gesture. He is resigned, accepting all the criticism with silence and stillness.

In stark contrast, the student becomes quite talkative in the *danmu* video. This again is achieved by specifying the intended speaker, that is the student in most cases, in the *danmu* comments. As remarked in one comment, '*danmu* serves as the student's internal monologue', where he becomes highly expressive of his attitude. The student is variously characterised as sad (Examples 4 and 5), anxious (Example 6), scared (Examples 10 and 11), surprised (Examples 11 and 12), impatient (Example 13) and proud (Example 14).

10. 段总：我好害怕 (comment in the *danmu*)
    (Manager Duan: I'm so **scared**.)
    [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: student; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: inscribed]
11. 段总：吓得我一激灵！ (comment in the *danmu*)
    (Manager Duan: I give **a start of fear**.)
    [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: student; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: inscribed]
12. 段总：我人直接傻了 (comment in the *danmu*)
    (Manager Duan: I am directly struck **dumb**.)
    [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: student; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: inscribed]
13. 段总：丁老师，你怎么还不走？ (comment in the *danmu*)
    (Manager Duan: Ms. Ding [referring to the teacher], why are you still here?)
    [Attitude: negative judgement; Appraiser: student; Appraised: teacher's staying; Explicitness: invoked]
14. 段总：数学是我强项 (comment in the *danmu*)
    (Manager Duan: I **am good at** math.)
    [Attitude: positive judgement; Appraiser: student; Appraised: self; Explicitness: inscribed]

It is noteworthy that although the student's sadness and anxiety can be interpreted as being revealed in his facial expression and bodily gesture, his fear, surprise, impatience

and pride cannot be traced in any mode in the original video. They are newly-added meanings made by the online viewers. That is to say, by posting *danmu* comments such as those demonstrated in Examples 10–14, the viewers extend the meaning of the original video. While watching, the viewers are meanwhile modifying and editing the meanings expressed in the original by leaving massive *danmu* comments over the original video. With *danmu* commenters directly participating in the meaning making, the *danmu* video is expected to be different from the original in many aspects. In terms of the characterisation of the student in the current case, the *danmu* comments provide rich descriptions of the student's emotions, as well as his on-the-spot behaviour, which can often serve as invocations of affective meanings (Examples 6, 15 and 16). The student's affective meanings are thus transposed into the written comments in *danmu*, which is presented in the foreground, and the meanings conveyed in *danmu* are consequently highlighted in the *danmu* video. Since these descriptions are most often intended as utterances from the student, he is characterised as very talkative in the *danmu* video, which is entirely the opposite of the characterisation of him in the original video.

Again, the characterisation of the student is a dynamic process in the *danmu* video, and it is unpredictable as to how the child will be characterised in a certain *danmu* version. He may well keep silent in the *danmu* video if the *danmu* is dominated by the comments such as those shown in Examples 15–17, where the student's feelings are revealed by description from a third-person perspective, rather than by utterances intended to be made by the student himself.

15. 段总眼里没有了光 (comment in the *danmu*)
    (There is no sparkle in the eyes of Manager Duan.)
    [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: child; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: invoked]
16. 愣住了都 (comment in the *danmu*)
    (He stopped dead.)
    [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: student; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: invoked]
17. 段总敢怒不敢言 (comment in the *danmu*)
    (Manager Duan **hates** it but dares not to say so.)
    [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: child; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: inscribed]
18. 娃快哭了 (comment in the *danmu*)
    (The child is to **cry**.)
    [Attitude: negative affect; Emoter: child; Trigger: teacher's home visit; Explicitness: inscribed]

Not only is it unpredictable as to *how* a certain character will be characterised in *danmu*, but it is also unpredictable as to *who* will be the target of the recharacterisation. The *danmu* may well turn out to focus on the mother, for instance. With such unpredictability involved in *danmu*, the meanings at stake become less stable and are open to renegotiation and change. This is not possible in video-sharing platforms where *danmu* is not enabled. In the platforms where comments appear in a separate section below the

video, commenters cannot participate directly in the meaning making of the video, and the meanings of the video are stable, not subject to negotiation. In this sense, the enablement of *danmu* can destabilise the meanings expressed in the original video by allowing viewers to participate in the meaning making of the *danmu* video. This resemiotisation from the original video to the *danmu* video thus demonstrates a process which is opposite to those described in Iedema (2001) (cf. Ravelli et al., 2013). By posting *danmu* comments, commenters take two roles simultaneously: they are viewers and, at the same time, co-producers of the *danmu* video. The affordances of *danmu* thus blur the line between the viewer and the producer, consequently transposing the interpersonal practice of video watching.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated how meaning is resemiotised in *danmu* videos. By analysing the attitudinal meanings of the short video *Home Visit*, we have observed two patterns of meaning-making shifts with *danmu* added to the original video. One is a shift in perspective, that is from whose perspective a given scenario is presented. We have found that the original video highlights the teacher's perspective, whereas the *danmu* video highlights the student's perspective. The other is a shift in characterisation. We have found that the student is characterised as silent in the original video but talkative in the *danmu* video. These findings thus demonstrate possible changes in meaning with *danmu* added to the original video, which can raise our awareness of the manipulation of meaning making afforded by *danmu*.

The findings suggest that *danmu* enables a viewing experience so interactive that viewers can become co-producers of a new semiotic artefact. By posting *danmu* comments, viewers directly participate in the meaning making of *danmu* videos. *Danmu* is thus not simply a real-time commenting system but a system that allows for the co-production of meanings. In the current case, attitudinal meanings expressed via facial expression and bodily gesture are transposed into written language, which is further imposed on the original visual images, and the original video is consequently resemiotised. In this process of resemiotisation, new meanings are also frequently created and added to the *danmu* video. *Danmu*'s enablement of co-production thus greatly extends the meaning and the meaning potential that the original video could afford.

There is, theoretically, no end to this resemiotisation process – new comments can always be posted and contribute to the meaning making of the *danmu* video. In other words, the meanings conveyed in the *danmu* video are updated constantly, shifting towards a direction that is increasingly easy to renegotiate and change. Adding *danmu* comments to a video thus demonstrates a resemiotisation process which is opposite to those demonstrated in Iedema (2001). In the *danmu* video, the meanings become less stable and less durable.

The dynamic nature of this resemiotisation process has several implications. It means, for instance, different viewers may receive different versions of *danmu*, and even the same viewer would not see the same version of *danmu* if the *danmu* video is accessed at different times. *Danmu* certainly also poses challenges to video producers: with *danmu* enabled, the video is open to further negotiation and no longer expresses the meaning intended by the original producer – the meanings expressed are essentially beyond the producer's control when every viewer is potentially also the co-producer. *Danmu* can

thus transpose the interpersonal practices and positionings in the video-sharing community (Iedema, 2001), which pushes us to rethink the purpose of video sharing and the relationship between the original video producer and viewers.

It is noteworthy that the influence of *danmu* has extended beyond geographical boundaries, reflecting an increasing need for interaction. By attending to one *danmu* video as a case, this research can shed light on the more general trend of the decentralization of power brought about by user-generated content, and can provide insights into possible future directions of video-sharing platforms.

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