

# Multimodal Discourse Analysis Perspective on Cross-Cultural Communication: A Case Study of Divas Hit the Road Season V

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**Abstract:** In the context of accelerating globalization, cross-cultural communication has become an important way to promote mutual understanding and cooperation among different countries and nations. This paper takes Divas Hit the Road Season V of Hunan Satellite TV as the research object, and uses the theory of multimodal discourse analysis to deeply explore the practice and effects of the program in cross-cultural communication. From the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis, symbols such as language, images, music, and movements in the program form an organic interaction. Language constructs a space for equal dialogue: the guests explain traditional Chinese customs and modern developments in accessible expressions, while understanding the cultural concepts of other countries through listening. This two-way interaction breaks down barriers. Images convey information through intuitive visual impact: the aesthetic of the Chinese guests' costumes, the ancient city landscapes along the Silk Road, and the lively atmosphere of local markets allow the audience to feel the charm of culture without excessive words. Music and movements play a role in emotional resonance: the melodies of traditional Chinese musical instruments interweave with local folk songs, and scenes of dancing together and collaborating on handicrafts transcend language barriers through body language, conveying attitudes of friendliness and respect. This integration of multiple modalities forms a three-dimensional symbolic system. It not only externally conveys the vitality of Chinese culture, showcasing the demeanor of young people and the continuation of traditions in modern times, but also connects Silk Road civilizations from a "walking" perspective, presenting the historical integration of different cultures. The program is not a one-way output; instead, it emphasizes equal dialogue, highlights the common pursuit of family, nature, and a better life, and promotes cultural understanding and identification. This practice provides important insights for cross-cultural communication: it is necessary to explore common values, make good use of diverse symbols, and uphold an attitude of equality. It has practical significance for enhancing cultural soft power and building a mechanism for dialogue among civilizations.

**Keywords:** multimodal discourse analysis; cross-cultural communication; Divas Hit the Road Season V

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## 1 Introduction

With the in-depth promotion of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, cultural exchanges between China and countries around the world have become increasingly frequent. Against this backdrop, how to effectively showcase China's cultural charm and development achievements to the international community through effective communication means has become an urgent issue to be addressed. As a popular form of media favored by the public, variety shows have a broad audience base and strong communication influence, playing an important role in cross-cultural communication. Divas Hit the Road Season V, a travel reality show launched by Hunan Satellite TV, is set against the background of countries along the "Belt and Road", leading audiences to experience the local customs, history and culture of these countries, and demonstrating cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and countries along the route. This paper uses the theory of multimodal discourse analysis to deeply analyze the specific application of various modal elements in the program in cross-cultural communication, and explores its role in promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

## **2 Overview of Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Cross-Cultural Communication Theories**

### **2.1 The Concept and Development of Multimodal Discourse Analysis Theory**

Multimodal discourse analysis originated in the 1990s and was first systematically proposed by O'Toole. Its core lies in exploring how multiple semiotic systems such as language, images, sounds, and movements collaboratively construct discursive meanings. Building on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, Kress and van Leeuwen regarded visual images as social signs equally important as language, proposing the theory that "images as social signs can depict the objective world just like language". They constructed a visual grammar analysis framework including representational functions, interactive functions, and compositional functions, expanding multimodal discourse analysis from the field of linguistics to diverse scenarios such as visual communication and cultural studies.

Domestic scholar Zhang Delu further proposed a comprehensive framework for multimodal discourse analysis, expanding the analytical dimensions into four levels: culture, context, meaning, and form, and emphasizing the interactive relationships between different modalities within cultural backgrounds and situational contexts. Scholars like Li Zhanzi and Hu Zhuanglin have verified the applicability of multimodal analysis in cross-cultural communication through empirical studies, pointing out the key role of non-linguistic signs (such as colors, spatial composition, and body movements) in constructing emotional resonance and cultural identity. Since multimodality plays different roles in meaning construction, taking it as a research object holds profound significance.

### **2.2 Cross-Cultural Communication Theories**

Cross-cultural communication refers to the trans-cultural transmission of information, involving two levels: first, the interaction and daily communication among social members from different cultural backgrounds, along with the resulting integration, contradictions and conflicts; second, the interaction and communication between different cultures based on systematic differences and their impacts.

Travel variety shows hold profound significance in cross-cultural communication. Such programs can convey interesting content like unique cultures and customs in international travel to audiences, breaking down cultural barriers, allowing viewers to access and understand other cultures in a relaxed atmosphere, and promoting exchanges and understanding between different cultures.

### **2.3 The Application of Multimodal Discourse Analysis in Cross-cultural Communication**

In cross-cultural communication, multimodal discourse analysis helps us better understand the differences and commonalities between different cultures, as well as the roles of various modalities in the communication process. Through the analysis of multimodal discourse, we can reveal the communicators' intentions and the audience's understanding process, so as to optimize communication strategies and improve communication effects.

## **3 Multimodal Discourse Construction of Divas Hit the Road Season V**

### **3.1 Auditory Modality Analysis**



Picture 1: Divas Hit the Road Members Experience Icelandic Cuisine and Spinning Production



Picture 2: Divas Hit the Road Members Communicate with “Wave Grandma” and Experience Icelandic Bars



Picture 3: Divas Hit the Road Members Experience Saudi Arabian Cuisine and Communicate with Nourah

Language communication is not only a tool for information transmission but also a bridge for cultural exchange. Through language communication, the members establish emotional connections with local residents. The natural and vivid conversations among the members showcase the interesting stories and insights during the journey, and the language expressions with a touch of daily life narrow the distance with the audience. For example, when the team tastes the food in

Iceland and Saudi Arabia, participate in spinning experiences, or dance in the book-selling bar in Iceland, the audience can more intuitively feel the local food and customs.



Picture 4: Cultural Exchange on the Cruise by Divas Hit the Road Group

The program also uses a large number of musical elements, including Chinese traditional music and local music. For example, Qin Hailu's performance of the Peking Opera Lihua Ode, Hu Xianxu's Tianjin clapper talk, and the ethnic-style music played when Dilraba dances fully demonstrate the charm of Chinese traditional culture. What's more, the show selects appropriate background music according to different scenarios and cultural atmospheres. When presenting local traditional folk activities, it uses ethnic characteristic music, such as melodies played by ethnic musical instruments in Central Asia, to create a unique cultural atmosphere and make the audience feel as if they are on the scene. In light-hearted travel scenes, light-hearted music with a brisk rhythm is chosen to enhance the entertainment and fun of the program.

### 3.2 Visual Modality Analysis



Picture 5: Divas Hit the Road Group Experiences the Blue Grotto





Picture 6: Iceland's Glaciers



Picture 7: Natural Landscape of Alula



Picture 8: Pelješac Bridge

Centered on the Belt and Road Initiative, the program weaves the natural landscapes, cultural heritage and cooperation achievements of countries along the route into a three-dimensional picture of civilizational exchange through delicate camera capture and in-depth exploration. The deserts of Saudi Arabia not only showcase the vast beauty of golden-red sand dunes and camel team tracks, but also present the traditional tent life of the Bedouins and the unique charm of ancient

mosques—with geometric patterns on domes and flowing light through hollowed-out window lattices, fully demonstrating the aesthetic and religious connotations of Islamic culture. Croatia's Pelješac Bridge is a testament to engineering marvels: aerial shots highlight its magnificent posture spanning the Adriatic Sea and wind-resistant construction technology, embodying China's infrastructure strength, while also recording scenes of local fishermen waving and merchants transporting goods conveniently, turning international cooperation into tangible benefits for people's livelihoods. Iceland's glaciers combine natural wonders with scientific value—their blue ice layers and emerald lakes are breathtaking, and the Sino-Icelandic cooperative glacier monitoring equipment endows this polar landscape with profound significance for ecological cooperation. The presentation of these scenes goes beyond mere scenery display; by integrating nature with culture and linking technology with people's well-being, it vividly interprets the core concept of the Belt and Road Initiative featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.



Picture 9: Divas Hit the Road Group Experiences Local Saudi Arabian Clothing

In the program, the members wear traditional Chinese-style costumes. For example, in Picture 4, Dilraba's clothing, and Qin Hailu wears Peking Opera costumes. These costumes not only showcase the charm of Chinese traditional culture but also convey China's cultural identity through visual symbols. Additionally, the members' clothing collocations and makeup styles also reflect local cultural characteristics to a certain extent. For instance, when they experience Saudi Arabian local costumes, decorative elements and color matching in the scene arrangement create a strong exotic cultural atmosphere.

### 3.3 Conveyance of Action Modality



Picture 10: Divas Hit the Road Members Experience Giant Swings



Picture 11: Divas Hit the Road Members Rescue Stray Cats

The members' body language also serves as an important means of meaning conveyance in the program. Unlike scripted lines, naturally expressed body language better reflects the genuine inner state of the guests and makes it easier for the audience to feel a sense of engagement. When the camera captures the guests interacting with local residents, details such as the full palm contact during a warm handshake, the naturally leaning-forward posture while hugging, or the voluntary bending of knees to maintain eye level when talking to the elderly convey a spirit of equality and sincere goodwill far more effectively than the phrase "Nice to meet you." These actions instantly narrow the psychological distance between the guests, the interviewees, and the audience. In scenes where stray cats are being rescued, the guests' slightly trembling fingertips as they carefully lift the cats, their furrowed brows showing concern, and the slowed pace of their hands as they gently stroke the cats' backs not only intuitively demonstrate compassion and respect for life but also arouse empathy in the audience, reinforcing the public welfare concept advocated by the program.

In the segment of experiencing traditional handicrafts, body language serves as a bridge for cultural dialogue. Faced with the unfamiliar tool of a spinning wheel, the guests' slightly forward-leaning upper bodies, their focused gazes fixed on the rotating spindle, and their tentative movements of repeatedly adjusting finger strength while imitating the craftsmen's techniques not only show reverence for traditional craftsmanship but also restore the authentic process of cultural learning through their "awkward yet earnest" gestures. This sense of curiosity expressed through body language not only allows the audience to more intuitively perceive the charm of traditional handicrafts but also stimulates greater public interest and attention in intangible cultural heritage than mere verbal explanations.

It can be said that the guests' body language in the program is a crucial complement to words and language. It transforms abstract emotions, attitudes, and cultural perceptions into concrete behavioral symbols in a visual way. This not only adds more depth and authenticity to the program's content but also builds a more vivid and accessible bridge for cross-regional and cross-cultural communication.

### 3.4 Auxiliary of Other Modalities

The program also employs other modalities such as text and images, including subtitles and picture captions, to assist in information conveyance and enhance communication effects. Voice-over narration plays a supplementary and guiding role, introducing knowledge about the history, culture, and geographical features along the Silk Road in an appealing language. The writing of narration focuses on exploring cultural connotations. For example, when introducing ancient city ruins, it tells the historical stories and cultural values behind them, enabling the audience to deepen their understanding of local cultures while enjoying the program.

## 4 The Cross-cultural Communication Effect of Multimodal Discourse in Divas Hit the Road Season V



## 4.1 Enhancement of Cultural Identity

Through multimodal presentation, the program enables audiences to gain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the cultures of countries and regions along the Silk Road. It not only showcases local natural landscapes and characteristic cuisines, but also deeply explores their historical culture, religious beliefs, folk customs and other aspects. When audiences see the guests in the program interacting friendly with local residents and experiencing cultural activities together, they will develop a sense of identity with this cross-cultural communication. Meanwhile, the universal human emotions and values displayed in the program, such as the yearning for a better life and the cherishing of family and friendship, can also arouse the audience's resonance, making it easier for them to accept and identify with other cultures emotionally, thus promoting mutual understanding and tolerance between different cultures.

## 4.2 Shaping a Positive International Image of China

Through the construction of multimodal discourse, the program presents Chinese traditional culture, modern development achievements, and the spiritual outlook of the Chinese people to international audiences. By showcasing China's contributions to the "Belt and Road" construction, such as the Pelješac Bridge, Haramain High-Speed Railway, Chinese express delivery projects, etc., the program stimulates the cultural pride and national identity of domestic audiences. For example, the members of Divas Hit the Road hanging the Five-Star Red Flag and celebrating National Day in foreign countries have enhanced national identity. Meanwhile, the friendly demeanor of the guests and the display of Chinese culture also convey China's national image as a friendly, open, inclusive, and responsible major power.

## 4.3 Expansion of Cultural Communication Influence

With the unique charm of its multimodal discourse, Divas Hit the Road Season V has exerted extensive influence in cross-cultural communication. After the program was broadcast, it attracted the attention of numerous audiences and triggered heated discussions on social media, with the reading and discussion volumes of related topics remaining high. This communication effect has not only enhanced the program's popularity but also expanded the dissemination scope of cultures along the Silk Road, enabling more people to understand and pay attention to these cultures, thus making positive contributions to cross-cultural communication.

## 5 Conclusion

The paper, through the multimodal discourse analysis of Divas Hit the Road Season V, deeply explores its manifestation forms, communication strategies, and communication effects in cross-cultural communication. It is the organic integration of these modalities that enables Divas Hit the Road Season V to construct a three-dimensional cultural symbol system. This system not only realizes the external communication of Chinese culture, allowing overseas audiences to perceive through the program the spiritual outlook of Chinese youth, the family interaction patterns, and the vitality of traditional Chinese culture in modern society; more importantly, it connects cultural nodes along the Silk Road from a "walking" perspective, placing Chinese culture in a broader civilizational map and showcasing the trajectory of mutual influence and nourishment among different cultures throughout history. This kind of communication is not a one-way "cultural export" but emphasizes equal dialogue and mutual learning among diverse cultures. While presenting differences, it highlights commonalities — such as the emphasis on family, reverence for nature, and pursuit of a better life. These universal human values are continuously reinforced through specific scenes in the program, thereby promoting understanding and identification among audiences from different cultural backgrounds. The study shows that the multimodal discourse analysis theory can provide effective analytical perspectives and methods for cross-cultural communication research.

In general, the cross-cultural communication practice of Divas Hit the Road Season V provides multiple inspirations for current cultural communication work: at the content level, we should focus on exploring the common values in cultures, using small entry points to display grand civilizations; at the form level, we need to make good use of the synergistic effect of multimodal symbols to make cultural communication more vivid and accessible; at the attitude level, we should uphold the concept of equality and respect, promoting cultural exchanges through dialogue rather than indoctrination. These



experiences are of great practical significance for enhancing Chinese cultural soft power and building a mechanism for civilizational dialogue in the context of constructing a community with a shared future for mankind.

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