

The Research of Henan Image Construction from the Perspective of Multimodal Discourse Analysis

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Abstract: *Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace, as a dance program in the Henan Spring Festival Gala, went virus on the Internet and triggered hot discussion about the integration of Chinese traditional excellent culture and modern Internet technology in different fields after its launching. This program not only innovates the presentation style of traditional culture, but also promote the image of Henan rapidly in some degrees. In addition, the Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace conveys rich information to the audience through using different modes, such as images, music, body movement and facial expression. This paper intends to analyze how different modes connected to convey meanings as well as constructing the image of Henan in the video based on the Visual Grammar Theory in Multimodal Discourse Analysis, which is an useful tool to analyze videos and pictures. After the discussion, the author concludes that Henan is a province with huge amount of cultural resources, open and innovative spirits, and cautious and conscientious images.*

Keywords: Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace, Visual Grammar Theory, Multimodal Discourse Analysis.

1. Introduction

The concept "City Image" was first explicitly proposed by American scholar Kevin Lynch (2001) in his book called *"The Image of The City"*. In the book, he said, "in any city, there is a public impression, which is the overlapping of many individual impressions, each shared by a certain number of inhabitants [6]. Lewis Mumford (2005), an American social philosopher, wrote in his book *The City in History: Its Origins and Prospects*, "the image of a city enables people to form a subjective feeling of the city through mass communication and the combination of various elements" [9]. Therefore, how to construct and disseminate the city image has been a heated topic in the process of urbanization. Henan, located in the Central Plains of China, gave birth to the extensive and profound Central Plains culture, and now Henan, as the core province of the "Belt and Road" and the central rise strategy, is playing a significant role in the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture. However, the image of Henan is not satisfying and some reports concerning Henan are always connected with negative events, such as poverty, stealing well lids and bureaucratism (Yang Liya, Zhao Yuying. 2022:77) [10]. In social psychology (A. Vaish, 2008), "negative bias" [1] is more diffuse and infectious than positive, neutral and negative emotions, which leads to the stereotype of Henan and even the phenomenon of regional black on a scale. While in March, Henan aroused great attention from the whole country and even foreign countries in that there are a series of cultural programs in Henan satellite TV, such as Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace and Rhapsody on the Luo River Goddess. The initial and most famous one is the Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace, which is one of the dance programs in the Henan TV spring festival gala and mainly explains that 14 performers are invited to attend the banquet held by Emperor at Shangyang Palace in Luoyang 1300 years ago. According to the data from Weibo, this cultural series "Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace" has more than 200 million view counts on some famous social websites, such as Weibo, Tiktok and Kuaishou platform. What's more, this video has gone virus on the Weibo for more than five times. Meanwhile, this cultural series also made Henan popular again. After this event, Henan seems to grasp the code to construct and disseminate its image and the Henan satellite

TV presents different cultural series in the following festivals including the Lantern Festival and Qingming Festival. Therefore, it is meaningful and important to examine how this cultural series help construct the image of Henan and what images can be built in this program.

As we all know, as a video program, this cultural program includes different modes, such as images, sounds and texts, which is a typical multimodal discourse. The concept of "multimodal discourse" was first put forward by foreign scholars Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) [8]. They hold that by means of videos, sounds and other elements, the study of multimodal discourse makes up for the defect of traditional research limited to a single language type and attaches importance to non-verbal resources, thus making the study of discourse more comprehensive. The study of multimodal discourse has been a hot topic since Kress and Van Leeuwen published their book *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* in 1996. Later, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) believed that image is also a kind of social symbol and it also has three functions. Thus, they proposed the representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning to discuss the meanings of symbols and images in videos.

Most studies concerning the Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace are related to the dance performance and the strategy about how to innovate the traditional culture. There are only few articles analyzing the program from the perspective of linguistics. In my opinion, even though the cultural series is just a video program, it is meaningful and significant to analyze it in the light of linguistic theory, including Systematic Functional Grammar, Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Metaphor. Only in this way, can we understand the deeper meanings conveyed by different symbols in the cultural programs. In this paper, I mainly analyze the program from the perspective of Visual Grammar Theory in Multimodal Discourse Analysis in order to know what images can be built and how they can be constructed through the analysis of different modes. On one hand, it can enrich the field of MDA and its application in image construction. On the other hand, this successful experience from this article will give other cities some examples to construct their own images.

2. Henan as a Famous Historical and Cultural Site Image

It is known to all that Henan is a province with a long history and also the capital of many ancient dynasties, including Xia, Shang, the Eastern Zhou Dynasty and the Northern Song Dynasty. At the same time, the cultural resources are also colorful and diversified. It is known to all that Henan is the cradle of Chinese civilization. The position of a place is the primary condition of its image dissemination (He Guoping, 2010:15) [5]. Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace is just one of the most famous one. In this part, the author will analyze the program from the visual grammar theory in MDA in order to find out how the first image can be constructed through the connection of different modes.

Representational meaning entails the relationship between the image and the audience, which can be divided into two aspects: narrative representation & conceptual representation. In this program, four scenes are included and used the narrative representation frequently, which are mainly in the form of telling stories. Cultural product with personification can be built based on stories and personification refers to the ascription of personality characteristics to inanimate objects, abstract things and various phenomena in nature (Chen Guoqiang, 1990:16) [2]. This dance, which lasts for over 5 minutes, tells the story of 14 musicians at the banquet, from preparing and organizing their makeup to perform at the banquet. The 14 agile Tang Dynasty girls seem to have walked through the painting, fully reproducing the trendy makeup style of "slanted red" that was popular among Tang Dynasty women's faces. The exquisite dress design has brought the image of Tang figurines in the museum to life. This image provides us a deeper understanding of the characters in the museum.

Except the girls' excellent performance, the background can also tell us some stories in the Tang Dynasty. For example, when the girls queued in a line, we can see different cultural relics, including Court Ladies Wearing Flowered Headdresses, the tri-coloured glazed pottery of the Tang Dynasty, Jiahu Bone Flute, Lotus and Crane Rectangular Hu, and Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk. All this works belong to cultural memory, which often appears in the form of collective memory, social memory and historical memory. Its research objects have gradually gone beyond the original literary works and rituals, instead the cultural relics, inscription, calligraphy and clothing have all entered the research field. Firstly, pottery figurine is one of the most typical symbols in Chinese culture. The 14 dancers came out lightly and behave happily on the way to the banquet, which restores the Tang dance figurines more than 1000 years. Secondly, the famous paintings are also the symbols in ancient Chinese. The work "Court Ladies Wearing Flowered Headdresses" shows the daily life of noble women, who are beautiful and happy in the garden. A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains, created by Wang Ximeng in the Northern Song Dynasty, shows the majestic momentum of green mountains and waters in the Northern Song Dynasty. Jiahu Bone Flute, as the earliest instrument unearthed in China, is known as the first flute in China. Its discovery rewrites the time of the origin of Chinese music and it is a miracle in the history of ancient China. All this images not only tell us some stories of the traditional culture, but also

show the image of Henan as a province with colorful cultural resources.

Compositional Meaning refers to how images present an integrated meaning by combing representational meaning and interactive meaning in visual signs and how they connect to visual layouts. Information value and salience are the subsystems of compositional meaning. Information value are realized through the distribution of objects in the video or picture. Therefore, Kress and Van Leeuwen classify information value to three kinds based on the distribution of images to which the information is given. The given information is on the left, while the new information is on the right. The top and bottom information values are consistent with ideal and accurate information respectively. In the placement of center and margin, the critical information is placed in the central position, while the other informative elements are generally placed in the minor position. For example, in the whole switch, 14 girls are always in the central part of the stage, whose main purpose is to express the beauty of these girls. Meanwhile, through the picture in 02:50, we can see the makeup, clothes and different instruments, which all belong to the precious cultural resources. For example, the headwear modeling can not only convey the court culture of Tang Dynasty, but also show women's elegance and beauty. In terms of make-up, it belongs to the typical make-up in the Tang Dynasty, especially the eye makeup. In terms of clothing, the costumes of the Tang Dynasty were mainly chest-length skirts. In the middle and late Tang Dynasty, the style tended to be loose and long-sleeved, elegant and fat. But the color is warm and bright, such as green, red and yellow. The appearance of these girls is just like the Terra-cotta figures of Tang Dynasty in the museum. Fourteen dancers wearing jumpsuits filled with sponge and with special cotton in their mouths recreate the plump figures of Tang Dynasty females. Besides, crescent-shaped makeup make audiences feel like travelling to the Tang Dynasty 1300 years ago.

This program represents Henan because it embodies a strong cultural heritage in Henan. The mischievous ladies in this "Tang Palace Night Banquet" are also another type of cultural relic who can speak. Not only can she speak, but she can also dance and be mischievous. Their serious appearance cannot hide their playful heart. Traditional culture is not hidden in museums, shelved or isolated. It should be exhibited to approach the people and the general public through creative means (Yang Shaohua, 2022:55) [11]. Henan is a major province of culture and cultural relics with a rich history. Henan is to China what China is to the world. The revival of traditional culture, the confidence of Chinese culture, and the increasing pride of traditional culture have made Henan a booster towards the innovation of traditional culture. Through the analysis, we can see the colorful cultural resources in this program and also in Henan province. Therefore, we can get the conclusion that the Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty has helped construct the image as a province with abundant and excellent cultural resources. In addition, Henan can also make full use of this advantage to create a huge amount of programs in order to disseminate the Henan's image as well as promote the traditional culture both in home and abroad.

3. Henan as an Open and Innovative Province Image

With the development of science and technology, people can add some creative factors in the presentation of traditional works so as to make them vividly and lively. In this program, it mainly contains different kinds of innovation, such as innovative ideas about the character, the presentation mode and the culture. In this chapter, the author will analyze these different innovative elements from the perspective of interactive meaning in visual grammar in that interactive meaning is more salient than other two meanings. The interactive meaning in the visual grammar corresponds with the interpersonal function proposed by Halliday (1985) [4]. However, its main function is to constitute and maintain social relationship between the represented participants and the interactive participants of visual communication in the image and simultaneously arouse the intention of the audience to the focus. There are three dimensions of interactive meaning in visual grammar to construct connection between participants and realize the interactive function of image: contact, social distance and attitude.

The achievement of interactive meaning is realized by an imaginary relationship, which has been built on the eyeline to evoke the psychological perception of the viewers. There are two kinds of contact: the demand image act and offer image act. In a demand image, its participants look straightly at the audience, creating a visual form of direct address in which the viewer is explicitly demanded of something by the image creator. While an offer image addresses the viewers indirectly with its participants making no contact with them. In the whole video, not a single represented participant makes any contact with audience, thus it belongs to an offer image. This implies that the author mainly attach great importance to the 14 girls and their behavior so as to exhibit the beauty and freedom of these girls on the way to the palace. This is also a creative thought to arrange the dance program in this way that audience are delight to hear and see. The director doesn't regard the girls as art character, Tang figurines simply, but real people with independent thought and identity. In this kind of relationship, even though the leading actors are still created object, it gets great respect and freedom in the whole program. Based on this idea, the topic of Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace is constructed as an interesting story about several young female performers on their way to a palace. The reserved performer image and lively young girls, the dreary palace and playful fighting form the big aesthetic contrast. All these thoughts is enough to express the director's innovative inspiration based on the traditional culture.

Social distance is related to the size of the frame and realized by the choice of shot lens and it can decide the relation between the participants and audience. A girl coming out of the crowds belongs to the personal distance and combing their hair along the river belongs to social distance in this program. Fantastic immersive visual efforts give people the illusion of being in the scene. This is due to the usage of technology, which is really frequent in the representation of video program. Before the performance, we can see quiet night sky, which outlines the background of this story. Then, in the stage of revival from statue to living people, the arrangement are in the style of gathering in two or three, which restores the image of

Tang figurines vividly. In the image of walking to the palace, the visual scene adds a variety of landscape paintings and cultural relics, such as Court Ladies Wearing Flowered Headdresses, the tri-coloured glazed pottery of the Tang Dynasty and Jiahu Bone Flute. All this innovation makes the audience immerse into the images and become one part in this historical moment. With the transition of plot and music, the background in the stage also changed frequently. In the last part of the program, all the girls dance in the palace and the lamplight and background give us a sense of glory and prosperity of Tang Dynasty.

Attitude is related to perspective and the audience's attitude is reflected by the angles and views used in images. There are two kinds of perspectives: horizontal view and vertical view, which help achieve the interactive meanings in the imaginary communication between the participants and audience. Horizontal perspective indicates the estrangement or engagement between the audience and participant, while the vertical perspective explains the power relation between them. In this program, most angles are horizontal and only one angle is vertical. For example, in the first three stages, all the images are presented in the style of horizontal angle, whose primary function is to show the equal relationship between the 14 girls and all the audience. Through this kind of setting, we can feel that the Tang figurines is not just a cultural relics put in the museum and they are just like vivid people. In the past, we can only see these antiques in the museum but now it can be presented on the screen vividly and lovely, which entails the innovative spirit of the director as well as Henan. Because only when there are huge amount cultural resources and the support of Henan's government, the professional director can innovate these works and revive traditional culture.

From the analysis above, we can conclude that the show is a mix of humor and homage to Chinese traditional culture. In addition, this program uses huge amount of technology method to make the work vivid and impressive. "We use 5G and augmented reality technology to combine virtual scenes with a real stage, bringing sing and dancing into a museum setting, creating a feeling of a wonderful night in the museum". Chen Lin said, the director of this program. The maids of the palace dance with the grandeur, and the cultural features of the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty are fully displayed. Chen said that after enjoying the gala, netizens said that they would like to go to visit the Henan Provincial Museum and he was filled with a sense of pride and achievement. They have contributed a little bit to the revival of traditional culture. Therefore, the Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace is a innovative program, which combines traditional culture and technology in order to revive the traditional culture. Meanwhile, the program also entails the open and innovative spirits of Henan in that only when the government supports innovation and has the cultural foundation, this program can be extremely famous and popular. On the other hand, this innovative work can also give us some inspiration about how to revive and develop traditional culture with the help of technological means.

4. Henan as a Cautious and Conscientious Province Image

As an agricultural province, Henan is tagged with simple, honest and hard-working by most people. In this program,

there are also the shade of this image, including the preparation stage, presentation stage and follow-up work. This part will analyze the program from the perspective of compositional meaning in that it is more salient than other meanings in the visual grammar.



Picture 1: The 14 agile Tang Dynasty girls

The Salience is one of the constituent elements in the compositional meanings and also the power of elements to catch viewers' attention and it can be realized through placement in background, the size of element, saturation of color and different degrees of brightness. In the picture below, the fourteen girls are in the center of the stage, which means that the girls are more salient than other elements. Meanwhile, we can see the makeup and clothes of the performer as well as their confidence on the face. This is the result of hard-working of all the dancers. As we all know, fat was regarded as beauty in the Tang Dynasty while all these girls are thin. Therefore, in order to revive the character truly, all the girls wear jumpsuits filled with sponge and special cotton in their mouth, recreating the plump figures of Tang Dynasty females. All these behaviors show that the performers are striving for excellence and never giving up even though they may suffer some difficulties and pains in the performance. The TV series "Our Ten Years" exhibits the story behind the Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty, which includes the background of the program and the effort that all the performers have taken. For example, as early as 2017, the director, Chen Lin had the idea of showcasing the profound traditional culture of the Central Plains with beautiful classical dance. For this reason, Chen Lin and her team members went to the museum several times to look for ideas. In the process of searching for materials, the painted pottery female figurines of Jiyue in Henan Museum and the Tang dance figurines in Henan Museum and Luoyang Museum attracted her attention. Chen Lin, who has practiced dancing since she was four years old, loves History of China and culture very much. She thinks that she and the Tang music figurines are peers and therefore she began to arrange this program from early years. Chen Lin said that it is a very realistic reproduction of some of the stories we rehearsed at that time. For example, during the preparation of the program, due to the tight schedule and many recording requirements, the actors fell asleep on the cold floor during the break. Looking back at it on the TV screen, it was really touching. The achievement of this program is closely related to the spirits of the director and all the girls in the performance. Even though challenges occur more frequently in the whole process, the director sticks to her mission and original intention. It is just this cautious and conscientious spirits that enable Henan to be out of circle and go virus online both in home and abroad. Even the foreign ministry spokesman, Hua Chunying, forward the video on her personal Twitter platform, which arouses great attention and interest of many foreigners. She said

"beauty comes from creativity. At the 2021 Henan gala, pottery figures in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) were brought back to life, dancing to show the audience around the Henan Museum. Just like a travel back in time". This video was welcomed by foreigners and foreigners are really amazed by Chinese perfect culture. A foreign netizen said that it perfectly presented the situation of the feast of Tang Dynasty to the audience. Other netizen said that it was the charm of Chinese cultural and it greatly increased cultural confidence. Through all this reviews, we can recognize the popularity both in domestic and abroad.

After this program, the Henan satellite TV sticks to create more cultural programs in order to revive traditional culture. Because the presentation of Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty is in the new year, they must create another programs in the Lantern Festival. Therefore, they must make their full efforts to create a new program in order to satisfy fans and spread the traditional culture. At last, Henan launches another creative performance, which mainly introduces the story that 14 girls in the Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace travel to the museum and some famous scenic spots. Even though the video is just 30 minutes, the content is plentiful and attracts huge amount of attention from people again.

From the analysis, we can conclude that the director and the performers are creative and hard-working in the process of spreading the traditional culture. On the other hand, we can also regard Henan as a hard-working and cautious image in the whole.

5. Conclusion

The Night Banquet in Tang Dynasty Palace employs various cultural elements and audiovisual effects, realizing the interactive meaning between participants and audiences successfully. After this program, the Henan satellite TV continues to launch a series of evening parties that combine different cultural elements in Henan, which is a model to dig deep into the cultural core in the new era and construct as well as disseminate the image of Henan. Based on the analysis above, this paper concludes that the program uses different modes, such as images, sound and body language to convey the excellent cultural core and it also plays an important role in the construction of Henan's image. Firstly, through the deep analysis of the modes in the program, we can have a comprehensive understanding of the performance as well as the traditional culture. Thus, the first image of Henan "a Famous Historical and Cultural Site Image" can be achieved in that Henan is the cultural and political center in some ancient dynasties and this program also belongs to a part of Henan culture. Secondly, the program uses 5G and other technological means to present a very beautiful stage effort so as to revive the traditional culture (Gao Cairong, 2022:93) [3]. Therefore, the second image can be achieved that Henan is an open and innovative province, which is good at connecting the culture and technology to present and spread cultural programs. Lastly, the preparation stage, performance process and the following works give us a better understanding of the spirits of hard-working and striving for excellence. The director and fourteen girls overcome all kinds of difficulties in order to restore the image of beauty in Tang Dynasty and present the best performance to the audience. Therefore,

through the metonymy, we can hold that Henan, as a cautious and conscientious province image, proves that Henan has the confidence to innovate the traditional culture and take the Chinese traditional culture to the global stage.

However, there are also some limitations in the paper, analyzing the cultural elements and dance performance need professional knowledge and due to the author's discipline level and knowledge structure, the analysis of this part is relatively subjective. Secondly, because of the limited length and time, the author just selected several typical images in this program, which proves that there are also other images can be concluded. Therefore, future study can be more comprehensive so as to give us a better understanding of the program and traditional culture.

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