

Original Research Article

Multimodal discourse analysis of new farmers' image construction in super new farmers: taking yan'an station as an example*Huiling Su, Liqun Fan**Hunan Agricultural University, 410000, China*

Abstract: As the key to rural revitalization, the image of farmers needs more positive attention, but is often constrained by traditional prejudices. The program “Super New Farmers” reconstructs the image of “new farmers” and the countryside from a new perspective, which has research value. The sixth episode of the first season, Yan ‘an Station, are analyzed with the theory of multi-modal discourse analysis to discuss the function and expression of symbols such as text, image and sound, and the new farmer image constructed by them. This move aims to break old perceptions, encourage young people to participate in rural construction, and provide innovative ideas and inspiration for similar programs to promote the positive dissemination and development of rural image.

Keywords: Multimodal discourse analysis; New farmers; Image construction; The super new farmers

1. Introduction

Farmers form the cornerstone of Chinese civilization, yet youth exhibit limited awareness of modern agriculture and the new farmer archetype, often constrained by traditional farmer stereotypes. The “Super New Farmers” program emerged, educating on modern agri-knowledge and encouraging youth interest in agriculture, showcasing the new rural landscape and farmer image. Current research on new farmers remains fragmented, lacking depth in image construction analysis and adopting simplistic methods. This paper, grounded in systemic functional linguistics, visual grammar, and multimodal discourse theory, examines the sixth episode of “Super New Farmer” Season 1. It delves into the functions and meanings of language, visual, and auditory modes, and explores multimodal collaboration in crafting the new farmer image. By conducting a multi-modal discourse analysis, it aims to elevate public understanding of new farmers, enrich research perspectives, and offer innovative strategies and insights for video-based new farmer image construction.

2. A theory of multimodal discourse analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis stems divide discourse into conceptual, interpersonal, and discourse functions. Conceptual function encompasses experiential and logical functions, while interpersonal function relies on modality, evaluation, and mood systems. Halliday’s theme-structure theory categorizes themes as monomial, compound, or sentence-based, linking theme (initial element) and rheme (core content). Kress & van Leeuwen’s visual grammar in ‘Reading Images’ aligns with systematic functional grammar, mapping to representation (conceptual and narrative images), interaction (audience-image dynamics), and composition (information value and significance). Zhang Delu introduced inter-modal relations in the 21st century, distinguishing between complementary (reinforcement and non-reinforcement) and non-complementary relationships.

3. Analysis of linguistic modality in super new farmer

3.1. Conceptual functional aggregation behavioral processes

As mentioned above, the empirical function of the conceptual function is manifested through the material system, which is categorized into seven categories by Halliday. Statistically, material and relational processes appeared most in this episode. These 2 behaviors both play different functions and roles respectively, promoting the continuous development of the plot until the construction of a full character image.

Example:

1. Yan'an city also launched a major strategy for finishing the apple industry...with an intelligent fruit selection line, and cold air storage as the focus.
2. This soil is three years of improved soil with fibers on it, and the loess layer of the soil is still there, so it's mountain soil.
3. Luochuan is an old apple production area, but the soil Maintaining the high quality of is very important.

Example 1 exemplifies Yan'an's swift modernization of apple industry, mirroring China's rural tech advancements. Relational process includes attribution & identification. Example 2 showcases Zhang Yuzhen's expertise in soil identification. Example 3 classifies Yan'an's natural advantages as an established apple region. Psychological process, seen in Example 4, conveys Zhang's resilience, recalling failures to underscore new farmers' perseverance and courage.

3.2. Interpersonal functions strengthen emotional communication

Verbal communication manifests in offering, ordering, stating, & questioning, mapped to declarative, imperative, exclamatory, & interrogative sentences. Intonations vary interpersonal functions, enhancing emotional exchange. This paper examines the tone system of subtitles, focusing on declarative & interrogative forms.

4. Zhidan County is mostly mountainous. Mountain apples' quality is good but requires more labor.
5. At the beginning, Li Yingjun...Li Yingjun in the original machinery on the basis of the beginning of the research can be directly in the hilly operation of digging ditches, fertilizer integrated machine.
6. Fertilizer application machine starts at the same time followed by the completion of the trench landfill fertilizer three-in-one efficient fertilizer.
7. Manual ditch digging is really too hard, I especially want to know is that we now have any relevant machinery that can replace this manpower?

In Super New Farmer, declarative tone prevails, used to describe scenarios and facts. Example 5 concisely outlines Zhidan County's terrain and apple farming challenges, foreshadowing the new farmer. Example 6 introduces Li Yingjun's new role, detailing his pursuit of an innovative hillside-friendly ditching, landfilling, and fertilizing machine, embodying the pioneer spirit. Example 7 elucidates the machine's workings, reinforcing the image of new farmers embracing tech innovation as a primary force. Questioning tone mainly guides the narrative progression.

3.3. Discourse functions echo back and forth

The subject position is the departure of information, in a coherent discourse, the information contained in the subject position can convey the organizational form and logical structure of the discourse, and thus it is an

important grammatical means of organizing the discourse, which plays the role of articulating the context and echoing back and forth. In this paper, several examples are extracted to analyze the subject position structure of screenshot subtitles.

8. Zhang Yuzhen increases organic fertilizer at the same time... so that the soil becomes soft and breathable.
9. Yan'an is rich in agricultural resources, ...all of which provide excellent growing conditions for apples.
10. Zhang Yuzhen, who loves apples as much as her own life, uses soil tasting to ...

Examples 8 & 9 occupy unmarked primary positions, with 8 detailing Zhang Yuzhen's eco-friendly apple cultivation model, and 9 highlighting Yan'an's resources for tasty apples. Example 10 features a compound subject, where "loves apples like his life" mirrors Zhang's dedication, mirroring his soil analysis for optimal conditions. The descriptive part showcases Zhang's innovative soil assessment method, revealing his love for his hometown and passion for apple farming through diverse angles.

4. Analysis of visual modality in super new farmer

4.1. Visual modal analysis

4.1.1. Reproduction function visually conveys content

In the program "*Super New Farmers*", visual elements occupy an important position. Through a series of images closely related to the countryside and farmers, the program visualizes the image and style of new farmers. The reproduction meaning of this episode of the program is mainly based on narrative images. Beneath an apple tree's shade, Zhang Yuzhen, a passionate new farmer, squats to taste the soil. Flashbacks reveal his 28-year apple cultivation journey, with 13,800+ acres yielding premium apples worth 25 yuan each. Despite agricultural risks costing him over 1.8 million, Zhang persevered, aiming to enhance Luochuan's soil for optimal apple yields. These scenes portrays Zhang as an avid learner and resilient farmer, deeply committed to agriculture.

4.1.2. Interactive meaningfulness helps shorten audience distance

Interactive meaning is concerned with the dynamic connection between the viewer and the world depicted in the image. In *Super New Farmer*, this relationship is primarily represented through the distance of the camera. The program's prolific use of close-ups helped to bring the participants closer to the audience. As Zhang Yuzhen tastes soil from a neighboring county, the camera deftly alternates between soil pots, mirroring his inner turmoil and the villagers' anxiety. Focusing on his face, it intensifies her struggle. Suddenly, a panoramic view heightens tension, emphasizing the competition's gravity. Then, Zhang faces the camera, confidently answering. The host joyfully confirms her correctness, and a sweeping shot captures smiles and applause, bringing relief to viewers. Close-ups deepen immersion, showcasing Zhang's agricultural expertise as a modern farmer.

4.1.3. Compositional meaning creates visual interaction

Compositional meaning is categorized into information value and salience. Information value defines the significance carried by the position of elements in the image. Generally speaking, the left element represents the known information and the right foretells the unknown; the top information is rich in important values and the bottom details, which together express the hierarchy and importance of the image symbols.

5. Auditory modal analysis in super new farmer

In the video of *Super New Farmer*, auditory symbols such as music, sound effects, character sounds, ground sounds, and scene sounds not only exist as independent symbolic modalities according to Van Leeuwen's theory

of Auditory Grammar, but also play a key role in constructing the interpersonal function of the whole video.

The opening drums and horns evoke Yan'an's charm while immersing viewers in program's intensity. New farmer Zhang Yuzhen's entry is marked by upbeat music, reflecting his optimism and apple industry's prosperity. Character and ground sounds enrich video's interpersonal dynamics. Ground sounds, like wind, rain, and human voices, boost realism. Dialogues and narrations via character sounds reveal Zhang Yuzhen's thoughts, emotions, and those of others. A villager's gratitude towards Zhang for selling unsold apples showcases his tech-savvy prowess.

6. Multimodal image construction in *super new farmer*

6.1. Homesick people with a sense of nostalgia

Most of the new farmers are with enthusiasm for his hometown. The new farmers in this episode, such as Zhang Yuzhen and Zhang Xin, are typical local people who are facing the depression of their hometown industries. They did not turn away, but shouldered the responsibility of seeking development for the countryside, and worked hard to explore a new track and seek new development for their hometown.

Long Meizi, the agri-recommender, praises Zhang Xin's zeal in selling the villagers' unsalable agricultural products. As Zhang Xin meticulously introduces the goods on live stream, the image and Long Meizi's words intertwine, forming a reinforcing narrative. Without Zhang's voice, Long's words lose depth; yet, Zhang's stream alone leaves viewers perplexed. Together, they reveal Zhang Xin's passion for both his business and hometown, showcasing the new farmer's dual love.

6.2. Highly qualified people adapted to the development of modern science and technology

In the rapid development of science and technology today, relying solely on traditional farming facilities and equipment is far from enough, will lead to inefficiency and waste of human and material resources and other issues, the addition of modern agricultural science and technology equipment will undoubtedly be twice the result with half the effort.

Two farmers challenged themselves to complete 200 meters of reciprocation on rugged gravel and grassy terrain in just 5 minutes, driving their respective farm machines. The visuals of their skilled driving, paired with minimal textual narration, showcase the machines' ability to triumph over diverse obstacles. This impressive display underscores the innovative prowess of new farmer Li Yingjun, solidifying his reputation as a pioneering individual adeptly adapted to the advancements of modern technology.

6.3. Artisans who create and seek new ideas and continuous research

Repeating simple things over and over again can also lead to big changes. In this episode, there is also a very able-minded female new farmer Li Rong, Li Rong has 9 years of experience in a vegetable greenhouse nursery, she insisted on every day through the hands on the vegetables to feel the temperature in the greenhouse by just touching the hand, and make timely adjustments.

Li Jianming, the new farmer's recommender, said that temperature is crucial to seedling cultivation and needs to be constantly observed and then manually adjusted in real time, and then the scene cuts to the image of Li Rong constantly bending down and lifting the plastic film on the seedling to sense the temperature with his hands. At this point, Li Jianming's words form a non-reinforcing relationship with the image of Li Rong's real-time temperature detection, expressing Li Rong's dedication to seedling cultivation day after day. Li Rong in the

image also said to the person next to him: “The temperature is about 31 or 22 degrees, too high, you should slow down the spraying to bring down the temperature”. constitute a non-reinforcing relationship.

7. Summary

This paper explores the multifaceted portrayal of new farmers in *Super New Farmers* using multimodal discourse analysis. It delves into conceptual, interpersonal, and interactive meanings, along with inter-modal collaboration, to illustrate how verbal and non-verbal elements (images, colors, lenses, compositions) interplay to create a vivid, realistic narrative image. Here, the farmers’ image emerges comprehensive and profound, embodying perseverance, courage, agricultural prowess, and practical wisdom. Their interactions with others and competition scenes deepen viewers’ appreciation of their lifestyles and spirits, crafting a lifelike, three-dimensional portrayal. Further, the analysis underscores that the mode in *Super New Farmers* can enhance emotional communication, foster visual engagement, and shape interpersonal dynamics. And, the program primarily portrays homesick, tech-savvy individuals, as well as innovative craftsmen.

About the author

Su Huiling (2000-), female, studying for master’s degree, research direction: applied linguistics, pragmatics. Research on Cultivating the Ability of College Students in Agricultural Colleges and Universities to Communicate Chinese Excellent Culture to Foreign Countries in the Context of Modernization of Chinese-Style Education (Project No. HNJC-20230448, Teaching Reform Research Project of Hunan Ordinary Higher Education Institutions in 2023)

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