

Digital Multimodal Empathy Narratives: A New Paradigm for International Communication of Local Culture in the Digital Intelligence Era

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Abstract

In response to the challenges and characteristics of local cultural international communication in the era of intelligence, this paper proposes digital multimodal empathetic narrative as a new paradigm for communication. This paradigm aims to achieve more effective dissemination and understanding of local culture on the international stage by leveraging the characteristics and mechanisms of empathetic narrative, combined with the current situation and issues of local cultural international communication. Specifically, the paper proposes three specific measures: practicing digital multimodal empathetic narrative based on symbolic coding system, expanding the temporal and spatial dimensions of empathy experience with digital AI technology, and constructing a matrix of empathetic narrative in international communication through collaborative efforts of diverse stakeholders, to address the challenges of local cultural international communication.

Keywords

Era of Digital Intelligence, Local Culture, International Communication, Digital Multimodal, Empathetic Narrative, New Paradigm.

1. Introduction: Narrative, Empathy and Empathetic Narrative

In international communication, narrative serves as a vital method and strategy for conveying information, expressing viewpoints, constructing cognition, and shaping ideologies. It not only functions as an effective communication tool but also stands as a means through which human beings perceive and comprehend the world. Narratives aid individuals in transcending cultural, linguistic, and geographical barriers, facilitating the sharing and understanding of each other's stories and experiences. Their characteristics encompass cross-culturalism, emotional resonance, cognitive construction, and value transmission.

Empathy, encompassing both emotional and cognitive aspects, denotes the capacity to establish emotional bonds and cognitive alignment during interpersonal interactions. Emotional empathy entails perceiving and experiencing the emotional states of others, typically as a spontaneous reaction linked to mirror neuron activity—a bottom-up process. In contrast, cognitive empathy involves identifying others' emotions and comprehending their perspectives, emphasizing the interpretation and assessment of others' emotional states—a top-down regulatory process. Thus, empathy comprises not only emotional resonance but also rational elements, rooted in one's cognitive framework as a subjective encounter. The collision and integration with preexisting cognition serve to enhance empathy, yielding persuasive effects.

In the realm of international communication, empathetic communication is considered a crucial aspect. It involves functions such as establishing emotional resonance and bridging cultural divides. Empathetic communication goes beyond mere emotional contagion; it focuses on whether it can evoke emotional resonance, encompassing a multifaceted process involving

emotions, attitudes, and behavioral support. Emotional contagion enables the audience to emotionally resonate with the content, while attitude alignment prompts them to identify or agree with the viewpoints or attitudes expressed. This ultimately leads to behavioral support, fostering emotional communication, cognitive interaction, and action coordination between communicators and audiences. In empathetic communication, emotions are not just a means of conveying information but also an integral part of information transmission and understanding. This communication form underscores the significance of emotional expression and resonance, aiming to foster emotional understanding and connection between communicators and audience, thus facilitating more effective and meaningful communication and interaction.

In international communication, empathy and narrative intertwine and complement each other. Narrative induces emotional resonance among the audience through its plot, characters, and emotional expressions, allowing them to share similar emotional experiences with the characters portrayed. Empathy, in turn, renders the audience more easily captivated and influenced by the narrative, thereby enhancing its contagiousness and appeal. Empathetic narrative, grounded in emotional and cognitive resonance, encourages the audience to form a comprehensive connection with the information and viewpoints conveyed in the narrative, achieved through plot development and character evolution, thereby shaping their attitudes and behaviors.

Empathetic narrative serves as an effective communication strategy in international communication. It presents information and viewpoints in story form, fostering emotional and cognitive resonance among the audience, thus influencing their attitudes and behaviors. In the era of globalization, empathetic narrative assumes an increasingly significant role. It facilitates the transcendence of language and cultural barriers, fosters understanding and communication across diverse cultures, and has become an indispensable component of international communication. It provides a new paradigm for navigating international communication within uncertain and culturally diverse contexts, thereby benefiting nations, states, and societies. [12], [1], [10], [9].

2. Roles and Mechanisms of Empathetic Narratives in International Communication

2.1. Roles of Empathetic Narratives

2.1.1. Bridging Across Cultures

Empathetic narratives can overcome language and cultural barriers, serving as a bridge for cross-cultural communication. Scholars in the field of intercultural communication, such as Samovar and [2], in their *Intercultural Communication*, have emphasized the importance of empathy as a key factor in successful cross-cultural communication. Empathetic narratives build understanding and communication among audiences from different cultural backgrounds by sharing emotions and values.

2.1.2. Emotional and Cognitive Resonance

Scholars like [11] and [8] have researched the roles of emotional and cognitive resonance in narrative reception. They argue that empathetic narratives evoke resonance among audiences through both emotional and cognitive connections.

2.1.3. Enhancing Communication Effectiveness

Empathetic narratives enhance the dissemination of information through emotional and cognitive resonance. Psychological studies show that emotional resonance deepens memory retention, while cognitive resonance facilitates attitude changes. Slater, in "The Power of Emotional Resonance: The Effect of Emotional Resonance on Advertising Effectiveness" ,

published in Journal of Advertising(2006), highlights how emotional resonance significantly improves the effectiveness of advertisements.

2.1.4. Facilitating Cultural Exchange and Understanding

Empathetic narratives contribute to fostering cultural exchange and understanding. This viewpoint is supported by cultural communication scholars such as Leung and Bhagat. In their "Cross-cultural Research in International Business: Advances and Challenges", published in [16], they examine how empathy functions in cross-cultural communication, promoting understanding and harmony among different cultures.

2.2. The Mechanism of Empathetic Narratives

The mechanism of empathetic narrative is a prominent subject in communication and narrative studies. As posited by [7], key mechanisms of empathetic narrative in international communication encompass triggering emotional resonance, guiding cognitive resonance, and integrating emotional and cognitive resonance.

2.2.1. 2.2.1. Triggering Emotional Resonance

Empathetic narratives evoke emotional resonance in the audience through meticulously crafted plots, character portrayals, and emotional expressions. When the audience empathizes with the characters in the narrative, an emotional connection is established. This process is pivotal for eliciting emotional responses in the audience, forming the basis for empathetic narratives to deeply resonate with them. Research suggests that emotional resonance can enhance memory retention (Slater, 2006).

2.2.2. 2.2.2. Guiding Cognitive Resonance

Empathetic narratives steer the audience towards developing cognitive resonance by presenting viewpoints, values, and conflicts within the narrative. When the audience aligns with the narrative's plot and values, a cognitive connection is forged. This process is crucial for audience comprehension and acceptance of the narrative's information, laying the groundwork for empathetic narratives to shape audience attitudes and behaviors.

2.2.3. 2.2.3. Integration of Emotional and Cognitive Resonance

Building upon emotional and cognitive resonance, empathetic narratives foster overall resonance with the narrative's information and viewpoints through plot progression and character development. This integration process is vital for empathetic narratives to achieve their communicative objectives, ensuring that emotional and cognitive resonance synergize to influence audience attitudes and behaviors.

In essence, the mechanism of empathetic narrative entails a multifaceted interplay of emotional and cognitive elements. Through this process, narratives can effectively establish emotional and cognitive bonds with audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds, facilitating cross-cultural communication and information dissemination.

3. Local Culture International Communication in Digital Intelligence Era

Local culture refers to the unique cultural phenomena and characteristics formed in specific geographical areas, reflecting the lifestyle, values, traditional customs, and historical heritage of the local people. Local culture is not only an integral part of various countries' cultures but also one of the splendid chapters of civilizations worldwide. In international communication, the importance of local culture is manifested in several aspects:

3.1. The Importance of Local Culture International Communication

Enriching cultural diversity: Local culture represents rich cultural diversity, showcasing the richness and diversity of human civilization. According to [24], as an essential component of cultural diversity, local culture plays an irreplaceable role in enriching the global cultural ecosystem. Through the international communication of local culture, it can promote exchanges and integration among different cultures, enriching the diversity of global culture.

Spreading cultural soft power: [19] suggests that local culture is a crucial component of national soft power. Through the international communication of local culture, countries can enhance their influence and competitiveness in the international community. For example, the international communication of China's local culture can boost China's cultural confidence, enhancing its image and status worldwide.

Promoting local economic development: The international communication of local culture can attract external attention, driving the development of local tourism, cultural industries, and other sectors, thus promoting local economic prosperity and growth [14].

Enhancing ethnic identity and cohesion: According to [3], local culture serves as an important carrier of ethnic identity. Through international communication, it can strengthen ethnic identity and promote ethnic unity and cohesion, contributing to the long-term stability and development of countries and ethnic groups.

Local culture occupies a significant position and plays a crucial role in international communication, enriching global cultural diversity, promoting the national images, and driving local economic development. Therefore, strengthening the international communication of local culture is of great practical and strategic significance.

3.2. Characteristics of Local Culture International Communication in Digital Intelligence Era

In the digital era, the international dissemination of local culture exhibits the following characteristics:

Facilitating cross-cultural communication and cooperation: Digital technology facilitates cross-cultural exchanges and collaborations for local cultures. Through internet platforms, cross-regional and cross-cultural communication and cooperation with international partners are achievable, thereby fostering the international dissemination of local cultures. According to [18], the development of internet technology has expanded the scope of cross-cultural exchanges, providing a broader space for international dissemination of local cultures. Similarly, Chen Xiaohong (2018) suggests that the current state and trend analysis of cross-cultural exchanges demonstrate that internet platforms offer more opportunities and potentialities for exchanges between different cultures, further propelling the international dissemination of local cultures.

Communicating in digital multimodal communication forms: With the advancement of digital technology, communication forms have transitioned from single-text and image-based to digital multimodal dissemination. Various forms such as videos, virtual reality, and interactive experiences are employed to showcase the charm and uniqueness of local cultures. For instance, virtual reality technology allows audiences to immerse themselves in the history and local customs of a place. [13] highlights that the emergence of digital multimodal dissemination forms enriches the presentation styles of local cultures, enhancing audience experiences and subsequently strengthening the international communication of local cultures. Additionally, studies by Li Juan (2017) have demonstrated the significant application effects of digital multimodal dissemination forms in the international communication of local cultures, serving as effective avenues for promoting local cultures to the world.

Adopting data-driven dissemination strategies: Digital technology provides ample data support and analytical means for the international communication of local cultures. Through big data analysis and artificial intelligence algorithms, a more accurate understanding of audience preferences can be obtained, enabling precise targeting of audience segments and the formulation of personalized dissemination strategies. [6] suggest that data-driven communication strategies play a crucial role in international communication, providing scientific foundations and effective approaches for the communication of local cultures. Moreover, studies by [17] and Zhang Xiaomei (2019) indicate that the application of big data analysis techniques can effectively enhance the international communication of local cultures, offering new insights and methods for their global promotion.

Applying emotional resonance narrative strategies: Digital multimodal empathetic narratives emphasize emotional resonance, triggering audience emotions through narratives and enhancing audience identification and affinity with local cultures. For example, showcasing heartwarming stories, traditional customs, and folk activities evokes emotional resonance among audiences. [4] found that emotional resonance narrative strategies deepen audience identification with local cultures, thus boosting the international dissemination of local cultures. Furthermore, scholars such as Qian Haiyan (2017) and Wang Zhiqiang (2018) posit that emotional resonance narratives have a long-lasting impact on the international dissemination of local cultures, leaving a profound impression on audiences' minds.

Diverse stakeholders participating in communication networks: International communication of local cultures is no longer confined to traditional mainstream media but has evolved into a diverse network of stakeholders. In addition to local governments and professional institutions, cultural organizations, grassroots groups, and individual creators actively participate in the dissemination and promotion of local cultures through social media platforms, short video platforms, and other channels. Studies by [23] and [26] indicate that diverse stakeholder participation injects new vitality and creativity into the international communication of local cultures, enriching communication content and forms.

3.3. Challenges of Local Culture International Communication in Digital Intelligence Era

In the era of digital intelligence, the international communication of local cultures encounters various challenges. These include disparities in cultural understanding and misinterpretations stemming from diverse cultural perspectives, as well as issues related to information overload and interference from irrelevant content. For instance, on social media platforms like Facebook, which boasts billions of users and ranks among the largest globally, the algorithms employed may prioritize mainstream content over locally nuanced or geographically specific cultural content. This can lead to a diminished exposure of local cultures in the international arena. This concern has been highlighted in the research of [20], who elucidates how Facebook's algorithms tend to prioritize content aligned with user interests, potentially neglecting locally nuanced or geographically specific cultural content.

Moreover, international communication of local cultures must contend with obstacles such as language barriers, cultural disparities, and challenges related to communication channels, all of which can impact the efficacy and reception of local cultures international communication efforts. As underscored by [15], cultural differences and language barriers are common challenges in cross-cultural communication, often resulting in misunderstandings or biases towards local cultures among audiences. Moreover, the digital intelligence era has exacerbated issues of information overload and inconsistent content quality on platforms used for disseminating local cultures, as observed in the research conducted by [5]. These factors collectively pose substantial hurdles to the international communication of local cultures.

Despite these challenges, it is within this context that the significance of digital multimodal empathetic narratives becomes particularly prominent. Through digital multimodal empathetic narratives, local cultures can overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, presenting their unique charm and characteristics to international audiences in diverse formats. Additionally, such narratives have the potential to enhance the quality and depth of local cultural content, creating more appealing modes of communication that foster increased audience identification and interest. This emergent paradigm opens new possibilities and avenues for international communication of local cultures, providing crucial support for their enhanced representation on the global stage.

4. A New Paradigm for International Communication of Local Culture: Digital Multimodal Empathy Narratives

Based on the role and mechanism of empathetic narratives, and in response to the characteristics and challenges of international communication of local cultures, a new paradigm of digital multimodal empathetic narrative is proposed as a solution. Empathetic narrative serves as a bridge for cross-cultural exchange, triggering emotional resonance and guiding cognitive resonance. This not only enhances communication effectiveness but also facilitates cultural exchange and understanding. In response to the diversity and challenges of international communication of local cultures, digital multimodal empathetic narrative, through the involvement of multiple stakeholders, combines digital communication formats, data-driven strategies, and emotional narrative techniques. Its aim is to enhance the dissemination effectiveness and attractiveness of local cultures on the international stage, addressing issues such as information overload and insufficient content quality, thus standing out in a fiercely competitive communication environment.

4.1. Digital Multimodal Empathetic Storytelling Practice Based on Symbol-Coding System

The symbol-coding system refers to a system composed of symbols and codes used to convey specific information or concepts. In the international communication of local cultures, the symbol-coding system can include various forms such as text, images, audio, and video, which can be disseminated to international audiences through digital platforms. Digital multimodal empathetic narrative practice based on the symbol-coding system refers to the use of various forms, such as images, sound, and text, to convey emotions and understanding, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of international communication. Through multimodal expression, local cultures can more intuitively and vividly display their unique charm and cultural connotations, eliciting emotional resonance and cognitive resonance among international audiences. This practice aims to utilize different combinations of symbol-coding systems through digital platforms, presenting the rich content of local cultures to international audiences in various forms, thereby enhancing their international dissemination effectiveness. At the core of this paradigm is its ability to facilitate multidimensional empathetic narrative, resonating with various audiences on emotional and cognitive levels, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of international cultural communication.

Taking K-pop in South Korea as an example, South Korean music production companies utilize digital platforms to showcase the charm of South Korean pop music to global audiences in multiple dimensions through the production of high-quality music videos, dance performances, and promotional photos. These multimodal contents are not only disseminated through traditional channels such as music programs, social media platforms, and video websites, but also reach every corner of the globe through online music streaming services and global concert tours. Due to the strong visual impact, infectiousness, and expressive power of these multimodal contents, they have successfully attracted the attention of young people worldwide

and formed a large international fan base. Similarly, the success of Japan's anime and animation industry also demonstrates the effectiveness of using various symbol systems for international storytelling. Japanese anime works, in various forms such as animation, manga, and games, are disseminated globally through digital platforms, spreading Japan's unique culture and artistic style. These works are not only broadcasted on traditional television stations and cinemas but also widely loved and sought after by international audiences through digital channels such as video streaming services, manga applications, and game platforms.

Digital multimodal empathetic narrative practice based on the symbol-coding system has become a transformative solution to address the challenges faced by the international communication of local cultures. This approach, based on the principles of emotional resonance and cognitive resonance, transcends language and cultural barriers, promoting deeper cultural exchanges and mutual understanding. By leveraging the expressive power of various symbol systems on digital platforms, local cultures vividly showcase their unique charm, eliciting emotional and cognitive resonance among international audiences. As a result, this not only avoids the dilemma of information overload and noise interference but also enhances the effectiveness of cultural communication, enabling local cultures to stand out in the global communication competition.

4.2. Expanding the Spatiotemporal Dimensions of Empathetic Experience in International Communication through Digital Intelligence

Digital intelligence effectively navigate and utilize digital technologies, tools, and platforms to gather, analyze, and apply information in various contexts. [2], [21], [22]. It plays a significant role in international communication. Firstly, it establishes a digital platform for cross-cultural exchange and cooperation, enabling local cultures to directly interact with international audiences, thereby promoting cultural exchange and collaboration. Secondly, digital intelligence supports multimodal forms of communication, such as text, images, audio, and video, which helps to comprehensively convey the unique characteristics and essence of local cultures, thereby eliciting emotional resonance and cognitive resonance among audiences. Additionally, data-driven communication strategies can accurately analyze audience needs, customize content accordingly, and enhance communication effectiveness. Digital intelligence also plays a crucial role in extending the spatiotemporal dimension of empathetic experiences in international communication. Through digital intelligence, empathetic experiences in international communication can transcend space and time in virtual simulated environments, providing audiences with a more immersive experience.

The spatiotemporal dimension of empathy experience refers to utilizing digital technologies, particularly virtual reality, to allow audiences to perceive the authenticity and presence of specific cultures or events in both time and space. This experience enables audiences to immerse themselves in a particular historical period or location, establishing connections with the scenes and contexts of that time, thereby gaining a deeper understanding and experience of the related culture or event. Through the expansion of the spatiotemporal dimension, audiences can experience cultural events that transcend time and space in virtual environments, making them feel more present and enhancing emotional and cognitive resonance.

The digital display of China's "Qingming Shanghe Tu" (Along the River During the Qingming Festival) is an example of using digital intelligence to extend the spatiotemporal dimension of empathetic experiences in international communication. Through digitalization and virtual reality technology, audiences can experience the scenes of life during the Song Dynasty depicted in this ancient painting, regardless of time and space, as if they were immersed in history and experiencing it alongside ancient people. This experience not only triggers emotional resonance among the audience but also guides their cognitive resonance with traditional Chinese culture, promoting understanding and respect for Chinese culture. Greece utilizes

augmented reality technology to showcase ancient Greek civilization relics, such as the Acropolis in Athens. Through digital intelligence, the architecture and sculptures of the Acropolis are digitized and combined with augmented reality technology, allowing audiences to view the relics of ancient Greek civilization in real scenes through smartphones or tablets, seamlessly integrating ancient civilization with modern society. This experience enables audiences to more intuitively feel the brilliance of ancient Greek civilization, enhancing emotional and cognitive resonance, and promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding.

The application of digital intelligence can overcome communication difficulties such as language barriers and cultural differences, break geographical and temporal restrictions, and allow audiences to freely experience cultures from different regions in virtual environments. At the same time, through precise data analysis and personalized customization, digital intelligence can optimize content quality, avoid information overload and noise interference, and enhance users' sense of identity and interest in local culture. Therefore, the extension of the spatiotemporal dimension of empathetic experiences through digital intelligence in international communication not only promotes cultural exchange and understanding but also helps address the challenges faced by the dissemination of local culture, driving better presentation and communication of local culture on the international stage.

4.3. Collaborative Construction of the International Communication Empathetic Narrative Matrix by Diverse Stakeholders

The matrix of empathetic narrative refers to the establishment of an interconnected and mutually supportive framework in international communication through collaborative efforts of diverse stakeholders, with empathetic narrative at its core, to facilitate the communication and understanding of local cultures. This matrix encompasses participants, resources, communication channels, and content, among other aspects. Through their organic integration and interaction, it facilitates cross-cultural exchange and international communication of local cultures. In the digital intelligence era of international communication, local cultures face numerous challenges and complexities. Single entity often struggle to address these challenges, necessitating the involvement of multiple parties to leverage their respective strengths and form a collective effort. Empathetic narrative, as a bridge across cultures, can evoke emotional and cognitive resonance, enhancing communication effectiveness, but its realization requires collaborative support from diverse stakeholders. Only through collective participation and concerted efforts can a more comprehensive and powerful empathetic narrative matrix be established, thus better promoting the international communication of local cultures.

Taking China's "Belt and Road" Initiative as an example. In the international communication process of this initiative, multiple stakeholders such as governments, businesses, cultural institutions, and media are involved, each playing their roles and collectively constructing a matrix of empathetic narratives. The government provides policy support and resource assurance, businesses contribute through investment and cooperation, cultural institutions engage in cultural exchange activities and project collaborations, and media outlets contribute through reporting and promotion, collectively presenting the concept, achievements, and values of the "Belt and Road" Initiative. This collaborative model involving diverse stakeholders has garnered widespread recognition and support internationally for the "Belt and Road" Initiative, effectively promoting the international dissemination and understanding of local cultures.

Specifically regarding cities, in the case of the Venice International Film Festival in Italy, the collaborative approach of multiple stakeholders has helped to successfully promote Italian film culture internationally. This international film event is jointly organized by the municipal government of Venice and relevant cultural institutions, with the government providing

financial support and the cultural institutions responsible for organization and management, while media outlets extensively cover the event, collectively providing the foundation and publicity for its successful implementation. This collaborative effort effectively constructs an empathetic matrix for international communication, attracting the attention of numerous international audiences and media outlets, thereby providing significant exposure and recognition for Italian film culture globally.

In the case of the 19th Asian Games held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, the participation of multiple stakeholders including the government, civil organizations, individuals, and well-known internet influencers has collectively promoted the international dissemination of local culture in Zhejiang and Chinese culture as a whole. As the main organizer and promoter, the local government of Hangzhou showcased Zhejiang's local culture and Chinese sports culture to the world through the planning and hosting of the Asian Games, along with extensive promotion and publicity efforts. Meanwhile, civil organizations and individuals actively participated in various cultural exhibitions and exchange activities, expanding their influence through social media channels. Well-known internet influencers utilized their influence and social media platforms to broadcast the highlights of the Asian Games and the charm of Chinese culture, attracting attention from both domestic and international audiences, further enhancing the international influence of local culture.

The collaborative construction of an empathetic narrative matrix by multiple stakeholders is an effective model for the international communication of local cultures. Through the participation of governments, businesses, cultural institutions, media, and others, a matrix of empathetic narratives is constructed, collectively promoting the display and dissemination of local cultures on the international stage. This collaborative construction of an empathetic narrative matrix enhances the international influence of local cultures and deepens international society's awareness and understanding of cultural regions.

5. Conclusion

The new paradigm of digital multimodal empathetic narrative for international communication of local cultures in the digital intelligence era is capable of showcasing the distinctive features of local cultures through various forms and with the assistance of multiple stakeholders. It breaks down language and cultural barriers to convey the unique charm and essence of local cultures, eliciting emotional and cognitive resonance among international audiences, thus enhancing the international dissemination effectiveness of local cultures. Further research will focus on exploring the applicability and effectiveness of this paradigm in different cultural contexts.

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