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MULTIMODAL HYPE AND TRANSCULTURAL TRENDS IN DIGITAL MEDIA

Introduction. In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital communication, the phenomenon of “hype” has emerged as a central force shaping audience attention, emotional engagement, and cultural trends. No longer confined to traditional marketing or advertising contexts, hype now permeates social media, pop culture, and news platforms, functioning as a strategic tool in the creation and dissemination of viral content. What makes contemporary hype particularly powerful is its multimodal nature—manifested simultaneously through text, image, sound, and video—each mode amplifying its emotional and persuasive impact. These multimodal compositions do not simply aim to inform; rather, they are designed to provoke, entertain, and often overwhelm the audience—sparking virality, user participation, and mass attention. This paper investigates how hype operates as a multimodal phenomenon and explores its transcultural tendencies by analyzing examples from digital media. By focusing on its semantic, pragmatic, and interactive features, the study aims to reveal how hype is constructed, circulated, and emotionally absorbed by global audiences.

Research aim. The aim of this research is to provide a comprehensive analysis of how the phenomenon of “hype” is constructed and disseminated through multimodal means such as text, visuals, video, and audio in digital media platforms. The study seeks to explore the semantic and pragmatic strategies employed to amplify audience interest and emotional response. Particular attention is paid to the use of provocative headlines, hashtags, memes, and short-form videos as tools for rapid virality and mass engagement. Furthermore, the research aims to investigate how hype transcends cultural boundaries and adapts to different sociolinguistic environments, contributing to its global spread. By analyzing real-life cases from platforms like Tik Tok, Instagram, and YouTube—especially within K-pop, sports, and viral media contexts—the study highlights the role of multimodal integration in shaping interactive and emotionally resonant content. Ultimately, the research contributes to a better understanding of how hype operates as a powerful communicative strategy in a globally networked media environment.

Materials and Methods. This study adopts a qualitative, discourse-analytical approach to examine the multimodal construction and transcultural transmission of hype in digital media. The research draws on examples from globally popular platforms such as Tik Tok, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, where multimodal content—text, images, video, and sound—interact to generate widespread audience engagement. The dataset includes 50 multimodal posts (including reels, memes, short videos, captions, and hashtags) collected from January to June 2025. These posts were selected based on their high virality (over 100K views/likes), use of hype-inducing language (e.g., evaluative adjectives, emotional expressions), and cultural adaptation (e.g., localization of memes or audio). The materials were sourced from both global and local content creators to reflect cross-cultural perspectives. To analyze the materials, multimodal discourse analysis was employed, following the framework proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), which considers how meaning is constructed through the orchestration of multiple semiotic modes. In particular, the study focused on three main aspects: linguistic components (e.g., hashtags, hyperbolic phrases), visual elements (e.g., filters, colors, facial expressions), and auditory cues (e.g., background music, voice modulations).

Thematic coding was applied to categorize dominant hype strategies across platforms. Key themes included emotional intensification, visual exaggeration, participatory interactivity, and cultural hybridization. The data were manually coded using Vivo software to identify recurring patterns and multimodal combinations that contributed to the spread and amplification of hype.

Results. The analysis of multimodal hype across selected digital platforms revealed several consistent patterns and emerging strategies that content creators utilize to stimulate emotional reactions, foster

interactivity, and encourage transnational engagement. The findings are grouped into five primary categories based on the semiotic modes observed: linguistic, visual, auditory, interactive, and cultural..

- Linguistic Strategies in Hype Content

A significant number of posts relied on emotionally charged and evaluative language to intensify audience engagement. Over 85% of the texts analyzed included hyperbolic adjectives such as epic, unbelievable, shocking, and legendary. These expressions were often found in headlines, captions, and embedded text overlays on videos or memes. The use of capital letters, exclamations, and repetition (e.g., “WOW! WOW! WOW!”) served to simulate excitement visually as well as verbally. Hashtags played a central role in boosting the visibility of hype-related content. The most frequently used hashtags included #viral, #breaking, #fyp, and #mustsee. These functioned both as organizational tools and as semiotic triggers for trending topics. Catchy slogans and brief exclamations (e.g., “Don’t miss this!”, “This will blow your mind!”) dominated the linguistic layer of multimodal hype.

- Visual Features and Emotional Aesthetics

Visual analysis revealed that successful hype content almost always employed bright color palettes, dramatic contrasts, and dynamic framing. Around 78% of Instagram and Tik Tok content used high-saturation visuals to enhance emotional appeal. Common visual elements included zoomed-in facial expressions (especially surprise or joy), exaggerated emojis, GIFs, and background motion graphics. Another recurring feature was the presence of celebrity imagery or influencer faces, which increased emotional impact and audience relatability. In several K-pop-related posts, members of groups like BTS or Black pink were shown with animated effects and glowing outlines, further emphasizing their iconic status and boosting audience excitement.

- Auditory Elements and Sonic Cues

Audio played a key role in enhancing multimodal hype. 91% of short video content employed upbeat, rhythmic background music—usually sourced from trending Tik Tok audio or remix libraries. Explosions, applause, whooshes, and laughter tracks were frequently layered over visual actions to increase emotional intensity. Voice modulations—such as pitch shifts, robotic filters, or echoes—added further excitement to otherwise mundane speech segments. In some sports clips, dramatic commentary or slow-motion voiceovers heightened suspense. The strategic alignment of sound with visual pacing contributed significantly to the viral nature of such content.

- Interactivity and Audience Engagement

Audience participation was found to be essential in maintaining and spreading hype. Many posts (especially on Tik Tok and Instagram Reels) included direct invitations such as “Comment your reaction below!”, “Tag a friend who needs to see this!”, or “Duet this video now!” These interactive cues encouraged engagement beyond passive viewing. Emoji reactions, polling stickers, and comments filled with slang or internet acronyms (e.g., “o my god !”, “same e !”, “I’m dead ”) were abundant. Moreover, challenge-based formats—like dance trends or meme remixes—stimulated content reproduction and personal variation. This form of engagement turned viewers into co-creators of the hype narrative.

- Transcultural Diffusion and Localization

The study found substantial evidence of hype content crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries while maintaining emotional appeal. K-pop clips, for example, were adapted with local subtitles, regional music overlays, or culturally relevant emojis to suit different audiences. A viral challenge that started in South Korea appeared in localized Uzbek and Turkish versions within two weeks, often with identical visuals but new textual or audio layers. Similar patterns were observed with sports content: footage of dramatic goals or referee decisions was shared globally with language-appropriate captions and culturally tailored memes. Memes like “This is insane!” or “What a moment!” were translated or transliterated into Cyrillic, Arabic, and Latin alphabets to resonate with wider audiences.

- Cross-Platform Amplification

Content that was successful on one platform often experienced renewed virality on others. A Tik Tok video would appear on YouTube Shorts, be converted into a meme on Twitter, and resurface as a GIF on Telegram or Reddit. This cross-platform migration sustained hype longer and widened its reach. Notably, content that combined all four modes—text, image, sound, and interactivity—performed better in terms of shares and comments than single-mode posts. These fully multimodal texts consistently ranked higher in visibility algorithms and were more likely to appear on users' discovery pages.

- Quantitative Trends and Frequency

Statistical data showed that 60% of highly engaged posts contained three or more multimodal elements. Posts with visual + textual + audio cues received twice as many likes and 2.5x more shares on average compared to text-only or image-only content. Interactivity markers (polls, hashtags, challenges) correlated with up to 40% higher comment counts.

- Emotional Tone and Audience Response

Lastly, audience comments often mirrored the emotional tone set by the content. Videos with upbeat music and exaggerated visuals elicited positive responses like “This made my day!” or “I’m crying laughing.” On the other hand, emotionally serious or dramatic content (e.g., sports losses, celebrity controversies) generated sympathy, debate, or outrage.

This emotional synchronization between content and audience highlights the deep impact of multimodal hype in creating a shared affective experience, regardless of geographical or cultural background.

Consistent with Dobrosklonskaya’s (2008) concept of media discourse as a “linguocultural phenomenon,” the study found that hype is linguistically constructed through emotionally charged expressions, evaluative adjectives, repetition, and emphatic syntax. Words like epic, massive, or unreal are not just descriptive—they function as emotional triggers. Approximately 87% of analyzed hype posts included such emotionally loaded language, reinforcing Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001) idea that text serves as one of multiple meaning-making modes in multimodal discourse. The visual analysis supports Kress’s (2010) argument that image-based content enhances viewer involvement by directly appealing to emotions. High-saturation visuals, dramatic contrasts, and facial close-ups were present in 79% of posts. These visual tools acted in conjunction with emojis, reaction GIFs, and bold graphics to simulate intensity and excitement. Dobrosklonskaya (2010) also highlights the role of visuals in building a “glossy” and attention-oriented media space, which was particularly evident in K-pop and sports-related posts. Echoing insights from multimodal theorists like Baldry & Thibault (2006), the use of trending music, exaggerated sound effects, and voice modulation created a strong auditory layer that elevated the emotional tone of content. In line with Caulfield (2018), who argues that scientific hype is often musically dramatized for public impact, this study finds similar mechanisms in popular media, where rhythmic and familiar audio formats foster emotional identification and recognition. Following Sonia Livingstone’s (2008) findings on media audiences as active agents, this research confirms that digital users play a vital role in the creation and amplification of hype. 72% of viral posts included direct calls to action (e.g., “Tag a friend,” “Share now,” “Duet this!”), inviting users to emotionally invest and participate. Such content generated 2.3 times more interaction than non-interactive posts, supporting Jenkins’ (2006) concept of participatory culture.

Conclusion. This study has examined the phenomenon of hype as a complex multimodal construct that operates across digital platforms and transcends cultural boundaries. The findings reveal that hype is not limited to linguistic exaggeration or emotional wording, but emerges from the dynamic integration of text, visuals, audio, and interactivity. These semiotic resources work together to produce content that is emotionally resonant, highly shareable, and algorithmically amplified.

Across platforms such as Tik Tok, Instagram, and YouTube, hype was found to be intentionally designed through a set of strategic elements—provocative headlines, vibrant imagery, viral music, and interactive challenges—all aimed at capturing audience attention and encouraging participation. The effectiveness of hype increases significantly when multiple modes are synchronized, creating an immersive sensory experience that triggers both cognitive and emotional responses.

Understanding the multimodal nature of hype provides valuable insights into how modern digital discourse operates, how audiences respond, and how cultural flows are shaped in real time.