Discourse and Rhetorical Analysis of Chinese Mainstream Media's New Year Messages

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Abstract

As an important editorial at the beginning of a new year, the New Year's message is an important communication ritual constructed by mainstream media in China, which not only highlights the role of mainstream media in positioning themselves and their social functions, but is also profoundly embedded in the development of China's society and the transformation of the journalism industry. This paper takes the New Year's speeches of the five major mainstream media in 2022 as the object of study, research in relevant cases and analyze the New Year message of Chinese mainstream media in 2022: Analyze the New Year message with a theoretical framework and use multiple rhetorical situations and symbolic metaphor system to reflect the cultural value of rebuilding identity and journey imagination, construct the legitimacy and professionalism of the professional authority of mainstream media, and present the concept innovation and value purported on the road of media reform.
Keywords: New Year's Dedication, Mainstream Media, Framing Theory, Rhetoric

Introduction

As a communication ritual constructed by the mainstream media themselves, the New Year's message "refers to the summary review of the past year and the future outlook"(Cushion, 2023), which looks back on the changes of the past year and looks forward to the expectations of the new year(Cushion, 2023). On the one hand, New Year's dedication is an important way of constructing the authoritative discourse of the media profession, and on the other hand, it is a necessary carrier for the construction of collective memory as well as the presentation of the process of social development. In the context of the difficult year 2022 in China's society and the changes in the media industry, what kind of response has the mainstream media made to the transformation of the industry and the development of the society? What kind of discourse system has been constructed to face the future development of society? New Year's speeches are an important perspective for examining the above questions. In view of this, this paper analyzes the New Year's speeches of the five major mainstream media in 2022,

and explores what kind of industry concepts, cultural consensus and emotional values the mainstream media have expressed through their New Year's speeches.

Rationale and choice of methodology

This essay uses news framing theory as a theoretical support. As an academic concept for examining human cognition and communication behavior, "frame" was first proposed by anthropologist G. Bateson in 1955. It was first proposed by anthropologist G. Bateson in 1955, and was eventually popularized in the field of journalism and communication after scholars continued to negotiate the connotation and extension of the concept.Ryan(1969) have defines "framing" as an "interpretive schema", which translates objective social practices into subjective perceptions of social reality. Gitlin takes up Goffman's idea and interprets it in terms of communicator and content, arguing that framing is a criterion for selection, emphasis and presentation, and a composition of principles used in selecting, emphasizing and presenting questions about what is there, what is happening and the construction of meaning(Gitlin et al., 1977). In his analysis of the air crash, Entman points out that framing is the ultimate achievement of emphasis through the repetition of words or images that point to certain ideas. On this basis, Chinese Taiwanese scholars Zhong Wei-wen and Zang Guo-ren proposed three levels of analysis of frames, which are high level, middle level and low level. The high level structure of frames refers to the significance or main idea of the event, which is often embodied by the headline, the introduction, and the direct quotes, etc.; the middle level structure includes the links of the main event, the history, the result, and the attribution, etc.; and the low level structure refers to the language used in the news, which includes the rhetoric, the methodology, metaphors, etc. (Thomasson, 2020).

To sum up, the key words, metaphors, concepts, symbols and images emphasized in the narrative to construct and present the framework, in other words, are embodied in the structural levels of plot structure, thematic structure and rhetorical structure. In this paper, the New Year's speeches of five mainstream media, including People's Daily, Guangming Daily, Seeking Truth, Xinhua News Agency, and China Central Television (CCTV), are selected as the research object, and the method of Constructive Discourse Analysis (CDA) proposed by William Gamson is adopted. Three levels of coding analysis were conducted, first identifying the obvious subjects in the first level, then deconstructing the text, coding, summarizing and classifying the main issues according to different discourse practices, and finally responding to what kind of industry concepts, cultural consensus and emotional values were constructed by the New Year's message of the mainstream media using communication rituals.

Social Connotation and Function of Discourse
Cultural Value: Rebuilding Identity and Journey Imagination

The headlines of the New Year's speeches of the mainstream media in China are concise and clear, usually about 10 words in length, expressing the vision of the New Year in a literary abstraction, without referring to specific events. For the above ideological expressions, the headlines utilize the three most frequent words, "new", "we", and "journey", to dissolve the authority of ideological discourse. The frequent appearance of the word "new" on the one hand represents the renewal of everything, which brings a greater sense of exhilaration to the readers, and on the other hand, we are standing at the historical intersection of "two hundred years", which leaves a greater space for imagination; "journey", on the other hand, utilizes the symbols of "new", "we" and "journey" to dissolve the authority of ideological discourse. "Journey" utilizes the metaphorical function of symbols, changing the ontology of

national development into the metaphor of "journey", which vividly deepens the public's knowledge of national development. The use of "we" is conducive to the construction of public identity. It not only brings the public closer to the narrator, but also integrates the future development plan into the public's daily life, constructs a sense of ownership, and arouses the people's centripetal force and cohesion.

Framing theory suggests that tendentious expressions and specific words are often repeated and emphasized in the media to achieve the purpose of making the point of view more prominent and recognizable. By combing the word frequency, we can find that the New Year's speeches of mainstream media in China always focus on the theme of development and the 14th Five-Year Plan, reflecting the political construction function of the news frame, i.e., to publicize the party's line and policy, and to show the government's philosophy of governance, political confidence and political image. The framing of news by mainstream media plays a huge political role, and through the use and emphasis on certain frames, it influences the way of perception of a large number of the public and even the whole society, thus promoting the process of political socialization. For example, the high-frequency word "history" highlights the fact that we are standing at the historical intersection of "two hundred years", reviewing the glorious achievements of the Chinese nation in the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Party, and in the face of the new historical orientation, we should make clear our new historical mission to better create history. High-frequency words such as "greatness", "modernization", "development" and "reform" look forward to the direction of China's development, They recognize past development achievements, and insist on the path of development.

In addition, the text of the New Year's message for 2022 highlights the importance of the younger generation. For example, Xinhua News Agency mentioned that "every seed of youth is accumulating the power to grow. Every youthful dream is blowing the horn of advancement. ...... Forward, the new generation that rides the wind and breaks the waves!" CCTV text mentioned "90 after 00 after the top, carried down, let people see the youthful vitality of Chinese society - the front wave to see the next wave, the next wave as expected!"

Professional values: the construction of legitimacy in the authority of the journalistic profession

From the New Year's speeches of several major media outlets, we can find that the New Year's speeches generally do not directly explain the discourse of the media itself or the news industry. In discourse practice, mainstream media mainly set up focus issues to shape their own professionalism and legitimacy of professional authority. As the object of framing, news events are not only the carrier of objective reproduction of reality but also the conveyor of meaning. When the mainstream media reviewed the news reports of the past year, we can see from the choice of focus events that they all involved the two challenges of "epidemic" and "poverty alleviation", and by reviewing the efforts and sacrifices made in these two challenges in the past year, we reaffirmed the mainstream media's firm position on the people and the spirit of service. By reviewing the sacrifices made in the past year, they reaffirmed the mainstream media's firm stance on the people and the spirit of service, which constructed professional authority from moral legitimacy.

On the other hand, statements such as "as media people, it is our duty to report facts and convey the truth" and "timely and objectively show the world the real situation of China's fight against the epidemic" express the profession and values that journalism has always been committed to, and at the same time shape the great blueprint of how the media should

communicate the country's image. It also shapes the great blueprint of how the media can spread the image of the country. "While fulfilling our media responsibilities, we continue to aim at building a first-class new mainstream media in the world, and exploring all-media construction under the Internet environment expresses the mainstream media's demand for reform. The development of globalization and the constant change of media technology have brought opportunities and challenges to the development of the new mainstream media, and the mainstream media have been actively calling for systematic innovation and industry innovation.

The Multiple Shapes of Rhetorical Approaches

Neo-Aristotelian rhetoric has occupied an important position for a long time since the revival of rhetoric at the beginning of the last century. It continues Aristotle's theory that rhetoric is defined as "an ability to find all possible ways to persuade an audience on any issue" (2012),and persuasion has a central position in rhetoric, including three main parts: types of discourse, categorization of arguments, and rhetorical elements. Both ancient and modern rhetoric are studied in terms of persuasive techniques of language use, more precisely they are describing various discourse features that make communication more persuasive, and the use of rhetorical devices and structures in journalism depends more on the communication goals and the expected communication effects. The media want us to get the desired effect through this kind of language behavior with metaphor, want the other party to understand and realize our communication intention, that is, trust our judgment to complete our requirements and orders, Van Dijk believes that rhetoric means persuasion. The rhetorical methods chosen by major mainstream media in the texts of New Year's dedications vary, such as rhetorical sentences, repetitions, and quotations in the text of Xinhua News Agency, and Guangming Daily mostly uses interrogative sentences, etc. This paper illustrates the rhetorical methods that are common to all New Year's dedications.

Rhetorical Context Examination

The use of prose in the New Year's dedication is widespread, this paper selected five mainstream media dedication have appeared in the rhetorical method of prose, and the use of prose are placed in the dedication for the future outlook of the framework, on the one hand, in the use of lyrical, rhythmic and harmonious, appearing to be emotionally charged, on the other hand, make the sentence rhythmic, catchy, highly persuasive, can enhance the expression of the article and momentum, and Deepen the center(Reidy, 2004)

As a rhetorical method to express strong emotions, exclamatory sentences are frequently used in New Year's speeches. The information and meaning it contains is not only limited to the language symbols themselves, but also a symbolic expression. The communicator's intention is to convey emotional information through the selection, processing and arrangement of symbols, so the use of exclamations in New Year's dedications is not only for emotional expression, but also focuses on the meaning of the symbols in the text. For example, four of the seven chapters of Xinhua's New Year's message end with exclamations, which not only serve to express emotions, but also reflect the national self-confidence of the Chinese people and even the Chinese nation in adhering to the Party's leadership, and call and appeal to the public to inspire people's fighting spirit to devote themselves to China's modernization and construction.

Symbolic metaphors

Yu,(2022) argues that the representation of the domain of thought relies on a conceptual metaphor system, meaning that the core metaphors can be divided into a number of subcategories, each of which is associated with a separate source domain, and which together become the mental structure that organizes knowledge. After analyzing the belief dedications of the five major mainstream media, it is found that there is actually a more stable conceptual metaphor system around the social identity of the people's master and main force. Journey, wave, flag and scroll, etc., appear frequently in these source domains, each of which thus forms a more independent conceptual metaphor. They cover all aspects of the working class's participation in socialist modernization, which in turn enriches and expands the meaning of the people's role as the master and main force of the times.

Conclusion

To sum up, through analyzing the texts of the New Year's speeches of the five major mainstream media in 2022, it can be found that they are basically carried out under the framework of "reviewing glory and looking forward to dreams". The discursive practices under the framework, on the one hand, play a role in constructing the cultural value of identity and development imagination, and on the other hand, through the New Year's speeches, they reconstruct the professionalism and authority of the media, in an attempt to construct a clear perception of transformation in the environment of the development of media technology in the new era. The New Year's message not only solves the long-standing problem of social identity for the people by utilizing rhetorical situations and metaphors, but also achieves the goal of consensus building and emotional communion by using multiple rhetorical strategies. In turn, it promotes the mainstream media to realize a virtuous cycle of media development in the ever-changing political environment.

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