

The "Informality" Tendency of Public Discourse from the Perspective of Interdiscursivity

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Abstract—In recent years, with the development of Internet and the renewal of intelligent equipment, the function of WeChat has become increasingly popular. As the representative of emerging official news discourse, WeChat official news account is increasingly popular with the audience. Taking Wu Jianguo's classification method of interdiscursivity as the theoretical framework, this paper selects the WeChat official news account of People's Daily as the corpus, and finds that the "informality" tendency of official news discourse from the perspective of inter-textual intertextuality is mainly embodied by the strategy of fusion intertextuality and mosaic intertextuality. In addition, from the perspective of adaptation theory, this paper analyzes the reasons for its use of different interactive communication strategies in order to reveal the "informality" tendency of public discourse.

Keywords—interdiscursivity; official discourse; informality

I. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of Internet technology and the continuous emergence of various intelligent devices, WeChat, as a new media, its functions are constantly updated and improved. The WeChat official news account is different from the traditional paper media. Because the prior one is shorter and more concise in length, more vivid and rich in content, more relaxed and lively in language, it is more and more popular with the audience. As the mainstream portal of Chinese news, the WeChat official news account of People's Daily, once changed the image of serious professionalism, began to intentionally or unintentionally apply intertextuality strategies to WeChat's official news reports. Regardless of the news headline or news content, it gradually began to show a relaxed and lively style, which seemed to be more "down-to-earth". Therefore, the number of its audience has been among the top in the WeChat official account of many media. This paper will select the WeChat official account of People's Daily as the corpus, and try to explore the intertextuality strategy in some news reports to reveal the "informality" tendency of public discourse.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the 1960s, French semiotician Kristeva (1967:439) first put forward the concept of intertextuality [1], pointing out that any text is the interweaving of multiple discourses,

and any text is the absorption and transformation of other texts. The characteristic of discourse is the intertextuality. French symbolists classify intertextuality as manifest intertextuality and constitutive intertextuality. As one of the most prominent representatives of critical discourse, Fairclough (1992:65) inherits and develops this concept by putting forward the concept of interdiscursivity for the first time as an alternative to the concept of constructing intertextuality [2]. Some Chinese scholars Wu Jianguo and Qin Xiubai (2006:34) first translated interdiscursivity as some intertextuality, and its definition refers to the mixing and blending of different genres, dis-utterance and styles in a given discourse [3]. Wu Jianguo (2012:20) studied intertextuality in contemporary Chinese public discourse from the perspective of pragmatics, and divided intertextuality into four categories: fusion type, mosaic type, conversion type and link type [4]. The realization of intertextual communication is closely related to the main trend of public discourse. Fairclough (1992) pointed out that public discourse in the contemporary world presents three chain development trends, namely democratization, commercialization and technicalization. On the basis of this, Wu Jianguo (2012:18) increased the "informality" tendency of discourse practice and language use.

With the deepening of discourse research, discourse analysis has developed in a diversified direction, but the research on intertextuality mainly focuses on literary discourse. In recent years, researchers have begun to apply intertextuality to non-literary texts, such as Wu Jianguo and Zheng Rong (2015) analyzed the "informality" tendency of public discourse from the perspective of the popularity of intertextuality in Taobao Style [6]; Gao Xingmei (2016) explored the intertextual nature of educational discourse from the enrollment brochure [7]; Song Kaige (2017) discussed the discourse trend of online holiday greetings jokes from the intertextual perspective [8]; Li li (2017) conducted a comparative study on the general rules of international student enrollment of Chinese and foreign universities from the perspective of intertextuality [9]. Wu Jianguo, Chen Congying, Zheng Rong (2018) explored the profile of "world top 500" companies in mainland China from intertextual perspective [10]. In addition, many scholars also explore the inter-textual strategies of official discourse from news reports. For example, Wu Jianguo and Lin Jinrong (2016) analyzed the discourse strategies of Chinese

dream communication from the perspective of inter-textual [11]. Chen Weihong (2017) [12] analyzed the pragmatic overview of intertextuality in news discourse in southern Fujian[12]; Yang Xin (2018) analyzed the discourse strategies of official discourse communication in "One Belt and One Road" reports from the perspective of intertextual communication[13]. From the above research, although the research on media discourse shows a growing tendency from the perspective of intertextual discourse, the existing literature is still insufficient for the research on media discourse strategies, and the research on the discourse of WeChat official news account is even less.

In view of this, this paper intends to study the following issues from the perspective of intertextuality with some texts of the WeChat official news account of People's Daily as the corpus:

- What intertextuality strategies are used in the news discourse of the WeChat official news account of People's Daily when it is disseminated?
- What pragmatic functions do these intertextual strategies play in the news discourse of the WeChat official news account of People's Daily? How to embody the "informality" tendency of public discourse?
- Why does the news discourse of WeChat official news account in People's Daily use intertextuality strategy and present an "informality" tendency of public discourse?

III. THE "INFORMALITY" TENDENCY OF OFFICIAL NEWS DISCOURSE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERTEXTUALITY

As the largest paper media in China, People's Daily has been deeply rooted in the authority and authenticity of its news reports. With the increasing popularity of WeChat function, on January 1, 2013, the WeChat official news account of People's Daily came into being. The WeChat official news account of People's Daily not only retains traditional political reports, but also launches scam reminders, practical knowledge, and aesthetic appreciation classes. The content of the publications often receives tens of thousands of readings and reposts in many media. The WeChat official account has been in the forefront for a long time. Therefore, the WeChat official account of People's Daily is selected as the corpus of the study and has certain representativeness.

In this section, the author first tries to analyze the relationship between some discourses selected by the WeChat official account of People's Daily and other discourses, and then explores their different genres, discourses, or styles and intertextuality strategies in discourse to reveal the "informality" tendency of public discourse. Through the selected corpus, the fusion, mosaic and linking intertextuality strategies are found more obvious.

A. Intertextuality Strategies and Functions of Official News Discourse

Integrative intertextuality refers to the blending of different genres, discourses or styles in a specific text. Wu Jianguo (2012) argues that the conventions such as discourse and style, which constitute the intertextuality of integration, are generally complicated and difficult to identify.

As the following example:

Example 1: Not a car, not a house, your future mother-in-law wants to see this, do you have it?

"A man cannot succeed without trust; a business cannot be prosperous without trust."

...We see a lot of girls looking for boyfriends, and their future mother-in-law says: "You have to take me to see the personal credit report of the people's bank of China". It's an old routine for the mother-in-law to pick her son-in-law who has to own any car or house. She might want to see this thing in the future. Do you have it?

—"Personal Credit Report"

Many of you have probably heard this word at some point in your life. Nowadays, personal credit is becoming more and more important. Do you know what your credit status is? Read on to see if you may use it in future blind dates!

What is a personal credit report? Regarding the personal credit report, the central bank's Credit Information Center website describes this: The personal credit report is the most basic product provided by the personal credit information system. It records the historical information of the credit transactions between the customer and the bank.

(WeChat official account of People's Daily 2019-03-11)

As shown in Example 1, this news mainly introduces the concept of personal credit report and its importance. Its title uses the form of questioning, which is easy to arouse the curiosity and interest of readers.

At the beginning of the news, the topic that readers are familiar with and interested in — the criterion for girls to find boyfriends is chosen as the starting point, and a lot of colloquial expressions are used. Such as: "old routines", "take me to see", "may use it". This lively expression style not only makes the reader easy to accept the new concept, but also facilitates the formal introduction of related concepts and the introduction of their importance. This news report, changing the seriousness and professional news discourse, adopts a mixture of news genre and daily dialogue genre, a mixture of written and spoken discourse, and a fusion of formal and lively styles. It is a typical fusion of intertextual discourse.

Unlike fusion-based intertextuality, the conventions of genre, discourse and style that constitute mosaic intertextuality often coexist in mosaic form, and one of them is often embedded in a template formed by another component with distinct boundaries (Wu Jianguo, 2012:18). In this kind of intertext, reporters often embed comments,

dialogues, stories and other special elements into the template of news report, forming a unique form. The question and answer format has been used many times in the news: "It's an old routine for the mother-in-law to pick her son-in-law who has to own any car or house. She might want to see this thing in the future. Do you have it? — Personal Credit Report" and "Do you know what your credit status is? Read on to see if you may use it in future blind dates!" This question-and-answer dialogue is constantly embedded in the news report genre, using a mosaic intertextuality strategy, which not only enriches the form of the report, but also makes a subtle interaction between the invisible and the audience through question and answer.

Example 2: These pictures that caused extreme comfort, and I also read it ten times.

Today, a video is hot on the Internet. The navy in the picture is dressed in white and the movements are neat. (video insertion)

"They have healed my obsessive-compulsive disorder." and "I thought it was a special effect." Netizens said.

In fact, such a series of "extremely comfortable" is not uncommon in Chinese military personnel. In daily life, their internal affairs are like this (multiple pictures are inserted)

The kitchen is like this (multiple pictures are inserted)

... In the backstage of the Spring Festival Gala in 2017, foreign journalists were stuttered by handsome Chinese soldiers passing by. (video insertion)

Not to mention the shocking scenes at the parade ceremonies. (flash picture insertion)

... these pictures seems to make people want to shout: "Cool!"

(WeChat official account of People's Daily 2019-03-31)

As shown in Example 2, the title reads, "I've only seen it ten times", and the final line reads, "these pictures make me want to shout: "Cool!" It is an obvious colloquial expression. This news adopts the combination of explanatory genre and news genre, written and spoken discourse, and the integration of formal and lively styles, which belongs to a fusion intertextuality strategy.

In WeChat official news account, the most common is a variety of pictures and text, video and text links. It is composed of stable and regular links between different genres, discourses or styles, which is intertextuality of linked texts (Wu Jianguo, 2012:18) [4]. In Example 2, in order to show the charm of the Chinese navy's training, relevant video is inserted in the report. In addition, many documentary pictures are inserted to report various aspects of the daily life of the navy, so that readers can feast their eyes. In order to catch the reader's eye, the exaggerated "stuttering" in a video by foreign journalists reflects the brisk and graceful posture of the Navy on a daily basis. There are many links to videos and texts, pictures and texts in this news. It not only reflects the rigorous orthodox news reporting style, but also has a relaxed and humorous style,

combined with written language and spoken language, which is a typical linked intertextuality strategy. Linked intertextuality strategy uses pictures + tables + video animation, which not only makes the form of the report diverse and rich, but also makes the content of the report more vivid and intuitive.

Example 3: Dad's tutoring son's homework crashed: I thank you, big brother

If a Dad takes care of his child, it is lucky that the child is still alive; if a Dad helps his child to do homework, it is good for the Dad to be alive.

Recently, a video where a father accompanies his child to do homework is very popular. In the video, the gentle and rational father gradually has an emotional breakdown, even being mad at his son and calling his son "big brother". (video insertion)

A mum in Nanjing, accompanying her child to write homework, was hospitalized in a heart attack. Dads were very surprised. "If you can slowly carve your children as a work of art, your attitude will change."

Mums, hmm. How interesting! You try!

The dads went into battle stripped to the waist, and after a few rounds, they were defeated and felt so sad.

"Do you need to think about it? Do you need to think about it?"

"Nine nine forty-five, are you angry?" nine nine forty-five!"

"Then don't cry, okay?"

The dad was holding the homework... and he found internal injuries in his hearts. He had to vent his anger on the table. Unfortunately, the table was hard, but his bone was broken...

(A screenshot of a father's broken hand)

Dads were laughing at their children. "I think you were sent by heaven to tidy me up, but you are kind to me. Mums and other people were so angry that they had stroke. You haven't turned me into a brain hemorrhage yet. I thank you, big brother, and thank you!"

(WeChat official account of People's Daily 2019-02-25)

The headlines of example 3 are very eye-catching, and readers are curious to know who the big brother here refers to through the news.

The first paragraph explains that big brother is what dads call their children when they are helping them with the homework. The language used in the news report is very witty and humorous, and some hot Internet words are used in the article, such as: "Mums, hmm. How interesting!", "he found internal injuries in his hearts", "I thank you, big brother!" In this news report, it is not difficult to see the integration of news genre and daily discourse genre, the combination of written and oral discourse, the coexistence of formal and lively style. The use of fusion intertextuality

strategy not only makes the report more vivid, but also can win the attention and understanding of readers.

In addition, the news also inserts the words of fathers when they guide their children's homework many times, which makes the life-like scene words embedded in the rigorous news reports. In the news, the mosaic intertextuality strategy was used to reproduce the scenes of daddy's alleged anger, helplessness and inner collapse. It can not only highlight the difficulty of fathers helping their children with homework, but also make the form of news reports more innovative.

B. The Expression of the "Informality" Tendency of Official News Discourse from the Perspective of Intertextuality

The "informality" tendency of official news discourse from the perspective of intertextuality is mainly reflected by the fusion of intertextuality strategies and mosaic intertextual strategies.

The integrated intertextuality strategy is the most frequently used strategy of the People's Daily WeChat official account. Many news reports not only use formal and rigorous news language, but also mix up relaxed and popular language, such as negotiation discourse, daily discourse, etc. This intertextuality of public-private discourse achieves the function of discourse colloquialism. It also vividly reflects the fact that in the current discourse practice and language use, more and more private communication has expanded into the public domain, and informal conversations gradually invaded public discourse (Wu Jianguo, 2012: 21) [5].

In addition, the discourse of the news official account also uses a mosaic-type intertextuality strategy, which makes the daily dialogue genre familiar to some audiences embedded in the news genre. This strategy not only enriches the expression forms of news reports, but also weakens the errors of discourse understanding, reduces the role of differences in values among different groups, further closes the distance between the audiences and stimulates the emotional resonance of the audience, which reflects the "informality" tendency of public discourse.

IV. REASONS FOR THE "INFORMALITY" OF OFFICIAL NEWS DISCOURSE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Verschueren (1999:108), a famous Belgian linguist, put forward the theory of linguistic adaptation. He holds that language use is a process in which language functions. In other words, language users constantly choose language means according to the needs of the communicative context, and finally achieve communicative intentions. Here, adaptation is embodied in the mutual adaptation between the language use environment and the choice of language structure, that is, the mutual adaptation of context and structure, which is the result of a dynamic negotiation between them.

Visollan argues that human beings are able to make choices about language because of its variability, negotiation and adaptability. Variability and negotiability make language

uncertain, but adaptability makes people make negotiable language choices from different contexts and structures to meet the purpose of communication. Intertextuality enables different genres, different discourses and different styles to blend because intertextuality is a special linguistic phenomenon and also has three attributes of the above languages: variability, negotiation and adaptability. Here, the author tries to use the theory of linguistic adaptation to analyze the reasons why official news discourse adopts the strategy of intertextuality and presents the trend of "informality".

Contextual variables include language users, physical world, mental world and other related linguistic factors, but context changes constantly in the process of language use. In order to achieve the purpose of communication, news editors must choose news content and language that meet the audience's needs in the process of writing news reports to cater to the audience's cognitive context. Accordingly, adaptation theory is suitable for interpreting official news discourse using intertextuality strategy and presenting the "informality" tendency of public discourse.

A. Adaptation to Physical World Variables

The physical world is a whole with universal connections, and all things are in a state of mutual connection and interdependence, which lays a foundation for the generation of intertextuality. Intertextual strategies, commonly used in our daily life, such as fusion strategy, linking strategy and mosaic strategy are all bridges connecting different language forms, making seemingly unrelated things establish a connection. In order to adapt to this phenomenon, the news editors of WeChat official news account adopted the corresponding intertextual strategies to establish intertextual relations between news discourse and other discourses.

B. Adaptation to Social World Variables

Human beings are social. In the process of communication, their behaviors are restricted by social norms, civilized norms and specific cultures. They have met the expectations of the social world (Wu Jianguo, Liu Rong, 2012:108) [6]. Successful news reporting is not only the transmission of language, but also the interaction between readers and editors at different levels and cultures. Surveys show that new media audiences are only willing to use 30 seconds to 5 minutes of fragmented time to read news, which means that they must attract the audience's attention in the shortest possible time (2016: 70) [15]. The titles of the articles pushed by the WeChat official account of People's Daily are not only clear at a glance, but also often use new and lively forms such as cross-examination, question-asking and plain and understandable language to attract more audience's attention. The title and the article are short and the language is easy and common, so that the reader can browse the news in a short time. This not only satisfies the fragmented reading needs of the audience, but also the social needs of the audience in a specific network culture.

C. Adapting to the Variables of the Mental World

For most of the current young audience, those ugly and lengthy news reports have long been unpopular. In order to attract more audiences, the editors of the WeChat official news account must adapt to the psychological needs of this part of the audience, and use the intertextuality strategy to explore the hot news events they like and hear in the most easy-to-understand language. In addition, news reports often use the online vocabulary that young audiences love to express themselves, keeping up with the trend of young people. As in example 3, more references to online hot words are more in line with the reader's novelty, which can make readers feel a sense of resonance and identity, and draw closer to readers, thus attracting more readers.

V. CONCLUSION

With the increasing impact of the Internet on people's lives, WeChat official news account, as a new form of media communication, can use various media synthetically, mixed various discourses and different forms of discourse, and the huge users of WeChat become a new generation of news audiences. In order to expand the readership, the news official account continues to make further transformation of news discourse while retaining rigorous and professional news and political reports. The use of intertextuality strategy is particularly evident. Based on some texts of WeChat news official of People's Daily, this paper studies the "Informality" tendency in official news discourse from the perspective of intertextuality, and explores the reasons for the "Informality" tendency in public discourse with the help of linguistic adaptation theory.

After the WeChat official news account of People's Daily, the news official account of Reference News, the news official account of Global Times and the news official account of China Daily Bilingual News also show the "informality" tendency of public discourse in news headlines and news content. Because these discourses are informal and colloquial, they have changed the seriousness and stereotyped image of the traditional formal news discourse. To a certain extent, they have weakened the discourse rights of the authority departments over the public, narrowed the distance between them and the audience, and thus are better accepted by the public (Wang Min, 2013: 84)[16]. The study of intertextuality of WeChat official news account is a brand-new topic. This paper tries to draw more attention and discussion from experts and scholars.

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