Research on the Development Status of "Non-fiction" Writing from the Perspective of Narratology
Taking the "True Story Project" as an Example

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ABSTRACT
This paper mainly takes the tweets of the WeChat official account "True Story Project" from 2016 to 2019 as a case, and explores the current development status of the new cultural form of non-fiction writing with content analysis and narrative theory. The research results show that narrative subjects of non-fiction writing tend to be popular, and the texts are mainly narrated by themselves, most of which are narrated by internal focalization. The theme selection has the characteristics of multiple groups and multiple fields. It is good at seeing the big from the small and reflecting the social reality and changes of the times with individual experience, in the form of depiction and single narration. In terms of narrative strategy, the four characteristics of detail description, use of dialogue, popular language, and news storytelling are more obvious.

Keywords: nonfiction, narratology, true story plan

I. INTRODUCTION
Non-fiction writing is a new writing practice in China in recent years. This literary form can be traced back to the United States in the 1960s, and reached its peak in magazines such as "The New Yorker" and "Esquire".

In 2010, the "non-fiction" writing column opened by "People's Literature" marked its official entry into China and was recognized by the mainstream media. In 2014, Li Haipeng, a media man, served as the chief editor of China's "Esquire" and established a special manuscript laboratory. He was dedicated to the output of high-quality "non-fiction" writing. In the second year, Wei Ling, a member of the laboratory, won the "annual special contribution" award of Tencent media by "The Killings in the Great Khingan" in 2015, which was widely spread on the new media platform. The official account of "Esquire" released long non-fiction report "A witness's own account of escaping from the Pacific", causing a great sensation in the social network. The reading volume of the article reached about 30000000. Finally, the film and television adaptation rights was sold at a high price, creating an unprecedented profit model in the field of Chinese "non-fiction" writing.

"True story project" is the representative of this kind of non-fiction writing platform. It uses the new media social platform to interpret the production and dissemination of non-fiction writing, and makes users immerse in the long reading of non-fiction stories in fragmented social media, which has become a cultural phenomenon worthy of attention.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW
A. Research status
1) The study of narratology: In 1969, Tzvetan Todorov, the French structuralist and literary theorist, put forward the term "narratology" for the first time in "the grammar of the Decameron". And then, a large number of works on the structural analysis of narrative works began to appear, among which the most famous one was Gérard Genette, the French structuralist. In 1972, he published "narrative discourse", which established a more rigorous and systematic system for the study of narrative discourse, and became the epitome of French structuralist narrative theory. As an exotic product, narratology theory entered China in the late 1980s, and began to attract the attention of scholars.
Genette's "narrative discourse - new narrative discourse" and other works were introduced into China during this period. At the same time, some Chinese scholars published related monographs.

2) The study of non-fiction writing: In "non-fiction writing course in Harvard University: how to tell a good story" wrote by Mark Kramer, an American writer, and Wendy Call, a journalist, "non-fiction writing has many titles, such as narrative news, new news, literary news, creative non-fiction writing, thematic writing, non-fiction novel, recording narrative". From the above description, "non-fiction" writing is featured by "narration", "journalism", "literary" and "non-fiction".

The concept of non-fiction writing summarized by practitioners includes three key words: authenticity, literariness and narrativity.

Authenticity requires non-fiction writing to be more realistic, so as to make people know what the world they live in is like.

Literariness contains complexity. Mainly, it is to use more literary techniques in the text and to be more refined in language. The non-fictional text is long. Compared with short reports and news, there is naturally a stage to display literary characteristics.

Narrativity is the most important concept in non-fiction reports. The purpose of non-fiction writing is to present a complete story and provide a good reading experience. Through the story of serious subject, the writer hopes that his works can be read by more people and transmitted in the form of stories.

B. An overview of true story project

"True story project" is the first real story platform in China, which is committed to the discovery and value mining of real stories and the introduction of non-fiction writing concept. The "true story project" mainly focuses on medium and long articles, which can be used to tell stories in the way of novels, but the articles cannot be novels, because the novels have fictional elements. One of the purposes of the platform is to make the "true story project" a national writing project. The official account of the platform is controlled within 5000 words, and it takes only a few minutes to read a story. When telling a story, the first person is used to make the reader have a better sense of substitution, so that readers and writers have a resonance. The photos related to the story are attached to the tweets, deepening the impression of the story to the readers and making the readers understand the story scene written by the author.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Research objects

The "True Story Project" was selected as the case, mainly based on the following three points. First, as the largest non-fiction literature platform in China, the "True Story Project" has the largest traffic and more prominent influence. There are more than 6 million subscribers on the entire network. The WeChat official account has been followed by more than 2 million people, which has a typical model meaning. The second is its unique production model, which relies on non-fiction story production of the UGC model. Through the social operation and communication of the new media terminal, it has also made pioneering explorations in the multi-media manifestation of non-fiction works and the commercialization of film and television. Third, the author has been paying attention since its establishment, and has a full understanding through long-term study and observation, which has laid the foundation for in-depth research.

B. Research methods

1) Content analysis: Content analysis is a research method that gradually reveals the meaning of a text from the surface layer to the deep level. Through the 62 samples of the official account of "true story project" from 2016 to 2019, this paper conducts research on three links of production, content and presentation, including statistical analysis of geographical distribution, narrator's identity, narrative perspective, narrative theme, narrative focus, topic type, narrative time, narrative strategy, presentation form, publishing time, interaction mode and communication effect, and explores the characteristics and status quo of non-fiction stories from the perspective of news narratology.

2) Case study: In the case study, it is to select cases related to the research theory to make the elaboration and demonstration. This paper attempts to summarize the advantages and disadvantages of the current non-fiction writing platform, and prospects the future of non-fiction writing in China.

According to the historical statistics of the official account, the first article of the "true story project" was released in July 11, 2016, and 1295 tweets were released by December 31, 2019, including 1234 original non-fiction stories. The 1234 articles were coded in reverse order of publication time, and 62 articles were selected as research samples according to the method of cyclic equidistant sampling.

The table of category is constructed. (see "Table I")
TABLE I. CATEGORY CONSTRUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Geographical distribution</td>
<td>1. Chinese towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Chinese countryside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3. the foreign areas</td>
</tr>
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<td>Narrator's identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. the organization</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. writer and journalist</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. the civilians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrative perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. syllepsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. common narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. self-statement</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4. multiple narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Narrative theme</td>
<td>1. amphoteric emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. affection/family</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. workplace/work</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4. campus/learning</td>
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<td>5. business/finance</td>
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<td>6. daily life</td>
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<td>7. medical/health</td>
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<td>8. history/politics</td>
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<td>9. justice/crime</td>
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<td>10. social issues</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrative focus</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. zero focalization</td>
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<td>2. internal focalization</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. exterior focalization</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. compound perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic type</td>
<td>0. non-hot spot</td>
<td>1. hot spots</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrative time</td>
<td>Time series</td>
<td>1. chronological narrative</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. flashback</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. pre-narrative</td>
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<td>Time span</td>
<td>1 overview</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. scene narration</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. pause narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>1. single narrative</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. repetitive</td>
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<td>3. comprehensive narrative</td>
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IV. A CASE STUDY OF THE "TRUE STORY PROJECT"

A. Production of works

1) Geographical distribution: According to the classification standards of Chinese towns, Chinese villages and foreign areas, 70% of the stories take place in Chinese cities and towns. For reference, there are not only first-tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, but also third- and fourth-tier cities such as Pingliang in Gansu and Hegang in Heilongjiang. From Hainan to the northeast, from coastal areas to inland areas, the exploration scope of "true story project" has reached all levels of cities in China. As a domestic media in China, the "true story project" also accepts contributions from foreign readers and authors. Among the 62 samples, there are 10 stories involving foreign regions. This also reflects the international vision and open attitude of the platform.

The specific data show that many stories involve not a single geographical scope, which may include two or three categories, especially special articles and long articles with more than 5000 words. This is because the time span of some stories is relatively large, mainly telling the protagonist's different stages of life from the countryside to the city and then to foreign countries. He Jiang's "My Road to Harvard" is a typical example. To some extent, it also shows that paying attention to cross-regional and cross-country stories will become an important non-fiction writing perspective. (see "Fig. 1")
2) Narrator's identity: With the development of the Internet and new media platforms and the rise of We-Media, ordinary people are given the right of identity and discourse, and have the channels of expression. As long as there are good stories, contributions will be possibly adopted to achieve better communication, and some can also become contract writers of the platform. For the non-fiction writing platform, with the technology empowerment, the writers transit from professional media practitioners and writers to every ordinary person, realizing the popularization of narrative subjects and expanding the scope of producers. At the beginning of the establishment of the team, there were only 9 professional media workers. Now, 2 million subscribers are likely to become the providers of platform materials, forming a win-win situation. (see "Fig. 2")

3) Narrative perspective: According to the narrator's perspective and position in the text, it is divided into four categories: syllepsis, common narrative, self-statement and multiple narratives.

From the perspective of syllepsis, it refers to the process in which the narrator observes and records the whole event as a bystander of the event. He only plays the role of expression. He is absent and has no sense of participation. Any plot in the story has nothing to do with the narrator. From the perspective of common narrative, the narrator is the secondary character in the story. He sees the process or part of the event and tells the story according to his own seeing and feeling. From the perspective of self-statement, the narrator is the protagonist of the story and completely tells his own subjective experience. The plot of the story comes from the real experience of the present or the past. The combination of multiple narrative perspectives means that a story includes the common narration of multiple narrators.

The above classification of narrative perspectives can also reflect the source of story material. The materials of syllepsis usually come from conversation or interview, the common narrative and self-statement both come from personal experience, and the combination of multiple narrators represents the combination of multiple story sources. (see "Fig. 3")

only 21% of the writers are traditional narrative subjects, such as writers and journalists, while only 5% of the writers are media organizations. It first indicates that non-fiction writing breaks through the traditional news production mode at the narrator level, that is, transforming from PGC (professional generated content) to UGC (user generated content) mode, from mutual integration of professional production content and user production content to dominating by user original content. The status is close to the traditional media, indicating that the civilian writing subject has become a trend, and is the new vitality of non-fiction writing.

It can be seen from the figure of narrator's identity statistics that 74% of the writers are civilians, while
Statistics show that among the 62 samples, 27 are self-reported, 15 and 14 are from syllepsis and common narration, and 6 are from multiple narrators. As shown in the figure, the self-statement leads by absolute advantage, nearly half of the total number of samples, followed by the syllepsis. This has something to do with the analysis results that most of the narrators in the previous section are ordinary people. Most of the ordinary people's contributions are telling their own stories or recording the things they witnessed and participated in. This corresponds to two perspectives of common native and self-statement, and are the representatives of "on-the-spot writing", highlighting the authenticity, sense of scene and vividness of the text, and enhancing the appeal. Therefore, it has become an important perspective adopted by non-fiction works. There are six tweets using the perspective of multiple narrators. Most of them are stories with large time span and more characters. The length and subject matter require the narrative perspective. At this time, it is necessary to combine multiple perspectives to write the story well.

B. Content of the works

1) Narrative theme: The narrative theme refers to the theme of the story. The narrative theme can be divided into 11 categories: amphoteric emotion, affection / family, workplace / work, campus / learning, business / finance, daily life, medical / health, history / politics, justice / crime, social problems and others. The specific statistics and proportion are shown in "Fig. 4" and "Fig. 5".
According to the data statistics, it can be seen that stories on amphoteric emotion accounted for the largest proportion, reaching 28%. Affection, as an eternal topic, often resonates most with the audience. It is a topic that people have paid attention to from generation to generation, ranking the first. The "True Story Project" hits the hearts of readers by showing real emotional experiences of happiness or pain.

Secondly, affection stories and family stories have also attracted much attention. In recent years, the discussion on the impact of the original family continues to rise, and the proportion of such stories is also in line with social reality. At the same time, many narratives focus on texts on other topics, and the subject of family is inevitably brought up by the content of the story. For example, in many stories about health care, the relationship between patients and their families is also the focus of the text. These two points are the main reasons for the large proportion of such subjects.

The campus and learning themes rank the third, which are related to the identity of many narrators as students. Moreover, these stories of youth growth related to campus life are also enduring hot topics, especially for young audiences.

The remaining topics account for a relatively small number of articles, but some of the common topics, such as health care, justice / crime, social problems, are worth exploring.

On the whole, the wide range of content is a feature of the topic selection of the "true story project". The theme involves many fields and groups. Based on social reality, it can dig rich materials and care for complex social issues. At the same time, it has deep humanistic care, focuses on individual experience, reflects the complex reality and the changes of the times, and reflects the existing problems of society and country. Also, this reflects the slogan of the platform at the beginning of its establishment: "to piece together the map of Chinese souls".

2) Narrative focus: Narrative focus refers to the perspective of the narrator in observing events. According to Genette's "narrative discourse · new narrative discourse", the narrative focus of the research object can be divided into four categories: zero focalization, internal focalization, external aggregation and compound perspective. Zero focalization is God's perspective, also known as no focus, that is, the narrator has no support point of focus, can break through the limitation of time and space, see the whole picture of the event, know what the hero of the event does not know, and can also see the occurrence of other related events besides the event. Internal focalization refers to that the narrator presents the process of events from the perspective of the protagonist, knows as much as the protagonist, and can only narrate what he sees and thinks. The external aggregation is from one-sided observation perspective. On the contrary, the narrator can not know the whole picture of the event from all aspects, even less than what the protagonist knows. As a recorder, he can not get involved in the character's inner feelings for deeper discussion, but can only do the most basic recording, and the narrative attitude is relatively objective and indifferent. Compound perspective refers to the combination of the above three narrative focuses in the same text.
Fig. 6. The narrative focus statistics.

According to the statistical chart, 28 samples use internal focalization, accounting for nearly half of the total sample size, which is basically consistent with the number of self-statement, while the number of zero focalization and the number of syllepsis, the number of the external focalization and the number of the other narratives, the number of the composite perspective and the number of multiple narrators are consistent. It is not difficult to find that the research of this result is actually corresponding to the statistics of narrative perspective mentioned above. (see "Fig. 6")

Because nearly half of the narrators are the protagonists themselves, they are telling their own experiences, so they can only stand in an internal focalization and write what they see and hear. As far as the internal focalization is concerned, it is able to penetrate into the inner heart of the characters to present deeper discussions, which is superior to the advantages of traditional news report.

For the external focalization, the narrator is a reporter or bystander, has a high degree of freedom and flexible narration. For similar topics with large time span, rich plots, and complicated and acute story background and social problems, external focalization is more objective and can play a more important role in investigation and research, so as to show the story in an all-round and panoramic way.

It is worth noting that there are 11 samples using composite perspective, accounting for about one sixth of them. In narration, they do not stand at a fixed perspective, but transform and combine multiple perspectives. This is also called "zoom", which can expand the readers' horizons and make the story more comprehensive, three-dimensional and vivid. It can better reflect the literariness and narrative charm of non-fiction writing.

3) Topic type: Non-fiction is an important practice in the field of news, and its degree of attention to social hot events is more worthy of discussion. Therefore, according to the reading of the sample, the topic types are divided into two major categories: hot spots and non-hot spots.

Fig. 7. The proportion of hot spots distribution.
As shown in "Fig. 7", there are 10 samples of stories published on hot events, accounting for 16% of the total.

One of them is to release relevant content in combination with festivals or special dates of great significance. For example, on the eve of the Chinese Valentine's day, it is required to pay attention to the marginal groups of lovers, interview several girls who are still in prison, and find a new way on the Chinese Valentine's day by major marketing agencies. The content is not only very attractive to readers, but also reflects the humane concern. Other hot events include interviews with popular figures at that time, as well as narratives of medical and health, politics, commerce, judicial crime and social problems.

The statistical chart shows that 52 samples are on non-hot events, accounting for 84%, which is much higher than the proportion of hot events. Among them, the narrative object of 27 tweets is very clear, reflecting the life of a certain group of people. The text that cannot be classified is aimed at all the people, and most of them discuss the problems in daily life and have been summarized in the narrative theme. Due to the lack of representativeness and typicality, no specific analysis is made here.

To sum up, most of the articles in the "true story project" are not about the hot issues, but more about the ordinary people's ordinary life which are worthy of recording and touching people's hearts. This is not only the embodiment of multiple values, but also the development trend of non-fiction writing from grand narrative to micro narrative. In the era of rapid development, it is required to grasp those things which are always unchanged, record the eternity, and directly attack the soul of human beings.

4) Narrative time: Narrative time is an important factor in the study of a story. Narrative time is closely related to experience time and story time. Experience time refers to the time that people are experiencing in physical concept. It is generally considered to be linear, and it is calculated in terms of seconds, hours and years. Narrative time is controlled by the author. The narrator can make space-time perversions or parallel through various narrative techniques, disrupt the length, order and speed of time, and create the concept of time in the text dimension.

The study of narrative time can start from three dimensions: time series, time span and frequency. Time series refer to the time sequence of story-telling; time span refers to the ratio of narrative time and story time, which can also be called narrative speed; frequency is the narrative rhythm, that is, the number of times that the event described occurs in the whole narrative.

a) Time sequence: According to the conventional classification method of text analysis, the time sequence can be divided into description, flashback and pre-description. In order to narrate the events happened, it tells the stories in turn, which is called description. Flashback refers to telling the later events or the ending of the story at the beginning of the text, and then tracing back to the previous events in order. Pre-narration refers to the prediction of the results of events in the process of story-telling, and narrates the events behind the text in advance, so that the narrative time is earlier than the story time.

Fig. 8. The proportion of narrative sequence.

The statistical results show that 52% of the texts are narration, with clear context and clear plot, which is easy for readers to read and accept, so it is also the main means of storytelling. However, such a text structure seems to be monotonous and boring, which is not conducive to the readers to grasp important
information, and it is difficult to avoid the redundancy of narration, which is in conflict with the purpose of traditional news reporting. (see "Fig. 8")

Pre-narration accounts for 33%, and flashback is the least used. The function of pre-narration is to hint the plot of the story. The description of the text has some emphasis, the ending will not appear abruptly, and the readers can easily accept it. And flashback is to create suspense, first tell the ending, attract the reader's interest, and then tell the details of the story.

b) **Time span:** Time span is the ratio of narrative time to story time. Genette divides narrative time into four types: ellipsis, summary, scene narration and pause narration. Ellipsis means that the story time is very large, while the narrative time is zero, the speed is infinite, and there is no writing about the event. Summary refers to that the narrative time is shorter than the story time, slightly faster than the story time, a lot of plot units are not unfolded, there is just the basic statement of the event. Scene narrative means that the narrative time is basically equal to the story time, the speed is normal, and the basic plot can be unfolded. Pause narrative means that the narrative time is very large, while the story time is basically zero, and the speed is slow. Depending on the detailed description of psychology, action and manner, a certain plot unit is concretely expanded to enlarge the time and freeze the moment. In this paper, the sample narrative time is divided into three categories: overview, scene narrative and pause narrative. According to the statistics of coding results, there are almost no texts that only use one narrative time interval, but basically use different time intervals in a story. This depends on the specific subject matter. Many stories span months or even years. The text within 5000 words cannot elaborate in detail. It can only summarize the basic situation, expand the individual plot, and then enlarge some details, so as to depict an accident in a three-dimensional way, which shows that the narration is well arranged, with a sense of rhythm, and also takes into account the breadth and depth.

c) **Frequency:** Narrative frequency is rhythm. The occurrence of this event is mentioned several times throughout the text. According to Tzvetan Todorov's theory, it can be divided into three types: single narrative, repetitive narrative and comprehensive narrative. Single narration refers to telling one event only once, repetitive narration refers to telling the same thing many times with different description methods or angles, while comprehensive narration refers to telling one with the same description method, but showing the occurrence of similar events many times.

According to statistics, it can be seen that 76% of the samples use the single narrative, that is, to say one thing from the beginning to the end. This method is quite common. However, it seems that the text structure is single, and it cannot highlight the key points. There is no deep description of the specific pictures, and the story lacks three-dimensional sense. A few texts that use repetitive narration are much more vivid. (see "Fig. 9")

![Diagram showing narrative frequency]

5) **Narrative strategy:** Based on the reading and research of the samples, four narrative strategies commonly used in the "true story project" can be summarized from a macro perspective: detailed description, dialogue, popular language and story reporting.

a) **Detail description:** Good details can hit the reader's heart and promote narrative. For example, in the text of "special manuscript: what do you mean by true feelings" after Shen Wei became popular, the...
reporter noticed all aspects of Shen Wei's vagrant life and refined it to the specific time of garbage collection.

b) Using dialogue: According to the traditional news production rules, the original words of the interviewees will be directly presented to the text when reporting. Non-fiction writing follows this technique.

c) Popular language: If the symbols involved in the construction of the text are obscure and difficult to understand, the implication of the meaning will be richer. In the corresponding decoding process, the participation of the sensory system will be higher. In contrast, the more concise and easy to understand symbols, the easier the decoding process is, and the less sense organs need to participate in it, so it can expand the audience coverage and improve user loyalty.

d) Story reporting: Story reporting refers to the use of dialogue, scene description, etc., to show the plot unit and specific details of the story in detail, so as to realize the stimulation of the drama contained in the event to the readers' excitement. This writing method can construct "symbolic authenticity", make the manuscript full and accurate and vivid, and play a positive role in arousing the reader's senses.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper uses content analysis and case study to study 62 samples of the "true story project" official account, and explore the status quo and characteristics of the non-fiction writing.

In the text of the "true story project", 70% of the stories are from Chinese cities and towns, so the proportion of rural stories can be appropriately increased. The civilians are the main role, which should be maintained and the UGC mode should be deepened. Narrative focus and narrative perspective are subject to the narrator, focusing on internal focalization and self-report. On the one hand, it is required to appropriately strengthen the transformation, combination and smooth flow of different narrative perspectives, so as to make the story more three-dimensional and full of scene sense. In terms of narrative theme, the "true story project" reflects the characteristics of multi fields and multi groups. The focus of hot events reflects a profound grasp of social changes. The focus of non-hot events has shifted from the grand background of the times to the tiny individual experience. It focuses on the pressure, problems or significance in society by individual experience, and takes into account both positive and negative stories. This responds to the "social" consideration of the topic selection, realizes the concept of "touching people's hearts", and makes non-fiction works become the "public instrument" of expressing public experience with individual experience, which has authenticity, sociality and resonance. In terms of narrative time, the "true story project" usually narrates the events in a sequential way. There is not enough use of flashback and pre-narration, and there is still room for improvement in the techniques. It can combine the narrative time of summary, scene and pause. However, it is not good at using repetitive narration and comprehensive narration, and lacks three-dimensional sense and advancement.

After the micro quantitative research on the narrative content of the "true story project", this paper summarizes the common narrative strategies from the macro perspective: detailed description and dialogue are most common, the popularization of language and the story of news are also reflected very clearly. These means are conducive to attract the audience, bring the readers an immersive reading experience, and guide the readers to think.

References