A Study on Narrative Strategies in Psychological Speeches Under the Influence of the "Identification" Theory

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ABSTRACT

Guided by Burke's "identification" theory, this article analyzes several typical psychological English speeches and uses analogy and comparison methods to explore the relationship between "empathetic identification", "identification by antithesis", and "identification by inaccuracy" and the construction of psychological speech narratives. It summarizes the psychological speech narrative strategies based on the "identification" theory, and explores the impact of these narrative strategies on audience empathy, in order to provide useful references for psychological speeches.

Keywords: "Identification" theory, Psychological speeches, Narrative strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Speech is a language exchange activity in public places, which mainly uses oral language, supplemented by body language, to clearly and completely express one's views and opinions on specific issues, clarify reasons or express emotions, in order to achieve the purpose of publicity. In terms of content, psychological speeches usually refer to speeches that focus on certain psychological phenomena such as loneliness, anxiety, time management, etc. In terms of purpose, psychological speech can be classified as persuasive speech, which means that the speaker needs to use the speech to gain audience recognition and to some extent influence people's thoughts or behaviors. Therefore, in the face of this special type of speech, it is necessary to use appropriate narrative strategies to establish the relationship between the speaker and the audience, in order to better achieve the purpose of persuasion.

"Identification" is a rhetorical theory proposed by Burke based on Western classical rhetoric. Burke proposed three ways to gain identification, namely "empathetic identification", "identification by antithesis", and "identification by inaccuracy" (Burke, 1969). As a representative of new rhetoric, he believes that the purpose of rhetoric should not be limited to "persuasion", but should be expanded to unconscious identification, and the persuasive purpose of speech should serve and adapt to the persuasive purpose in rhetoric. Therefore, the combination of psychological speech and "identification" theory can generate a set of speech strategies aimed at gaining recognition.

2. THE CURRENT RESEARCH SITUATION OF THE "IDENTIFICATION" THEORY IN CHINA AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Liu Li (2008) pointed out that as a representative of "new rhetoric", Burke's "identification" rhetoric theory is an inheritance and development of Aristotle's classical rhetoric, and has been further developed in theory with "empathetic identity", "identification by antithesis", and "identification by inaccuracy".

The study of Burke's theory in the United States began in the 1960s and is still enduring to this day. Burke's (1969) "New Rhetoric" is a famous paper in the early research of the "identification" theory. In 1984, the United States established the Burke Institute, which consisted of up to 100 members from various fields such as English linguistics,

speech communication, sociology, economics, rhetoric, and philosophy. Jensen (2018) pointed out that by systematically using Burke's rhetorical devices, people can help the audience re-examine the fundamental expression of their original views in early sociolinguistics.

The research on the "identification" theory in Burke's New Rhetoric started relatively late in China, and it is more inclined to use "New Rhetoric" and "Recognition Theory" to replace the concept of "identification". Deng Zhiyong (2008) first published research on new rhetoric and identity theory, mainly analyzing the main characteristics of New Rhetoric and the structural ideas of Burke's Theory. He believed that rhetoric is the core of life and plays an irreplaceable role in it. Wang Xiaolu (2010), on the other hand, pointed the research on the construction method of "identity" in the same theory towards the field of English public speaking. Sun Qirong (2019) and others believed that the same theory can be applied to rhetorical discourse analysis, helping people master the methods of interpreting speech discourse and understand the speaker's behavioral motivation.

3. THE CONSTRUCTION OF "IDENTITY" IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SPEECH BASED ON THE THEORY OF "IDENTIFICATION"

The "empathetic identification" in Burke's "identification" theory emphasizes the establishment of a connection between the speaker and the audience through common interests or emotions, so that they have the same emotional attitude and achieve the goal of identification (Burke, 1969). This coincides with the essence of psychological speeches, as psychological speeches focus on inner feelings. The speaker's speech topic is psychological topics that people may encounter in their daily lives. While expressing one's own views in a speech, it is also important to reflect the same inner feelings or pursuits as the audience. For example, in a psychological speech with the theme of "anxiety", it is not only necessary to objectively state the symptoms, causes, and treatment methods of anxiety, but also to explain the patient's psychological state and inner activities from their perspective. In addition, curing anxiety disorder is a common desire of all patients and their families, as well as a common interest of the speaker and audience. "Empathetic identification" is often the most common speech strategy in public speaking. If

the speaker does not respond to the audience's emotions in a psychological speech, it is difficult to achieve the purpose of persuasion in the speech.

The "identification by antithesis" in Burke's "identification" theory refers to the cooperation between the speaker and the audience by setting a common negative (Burke, 1969). In psychological speeches, mental health is a common desire of people, while mental illness is a common negative aspect of everyone towards the speaker and audience. Taking the theme of "anxiety" as an example, under this theme, the speaker hardly needs to deliberately set an opposition, and the theme itself can be seen as a common opposition between the speaker and the audience. When the audience enters the speech context with a feeling of overcoming anxiety, they can better follow the speaker's listening and thinking compared to not having this opposite side. Incorporating the strategy of opposing identification into a speech can enable both the audience and the speaker to think from the same perspective and generate stronger psychological identification with the content of the speech.

The "identification by inaccuracy" in Burke's "identification" theory refers to the speaker using words or sentences such as "including the audience" to make the audience unconsciously agree. The most common way is to use "we" to express ourselves in the subject or person, incorporating the audience into the context set by the speaker, in order to achieve the goal of identification (Burke, 1969). From the perspective of language effects, "identification by inaccuracy" can allow the speaker and the audience to think from the same perspective, and can also bring both parties closer psychologically. From the perspective of usage focus, "identification by inaccuracy" is often used in discourse expression, interspersed in sentences of discourse, to achieve emotional identification in the form of a certain word, which can unconsciously generate a sense of identification among the audience, that is, without the need to understand the entire speech content. For example, when it comes to the negative emotions generated by "anxiety", the speaker will repeatedly mention "we", such as, "We will talk about 'how to identify the negative emotions in our life?'", so as to unconsciously evoke resonance among the audience.

4. THE "IDENTIFICATION" THEORY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SPEECHES

Speech is a narrative stage that combines auditory and visual elements, and most English speeches take 10-30 minutes. During these 20 minutes or so, with a significant amount of valuable time for the audience, narrative strategies have become an indispensable part of the speech. A reasonable narrative structure and time allocation can maximize the speaker's interest in the speech, deepen the theme of the speech, and also enable the audience to obtain more useful information within a limited time. The narration in a speech is usually divided into three parts: theme introduction, content expansion, and theme deepening. The content of these three parts is in a progressive relationship, making the logic of the speech gradually clear, the atmosphere gradually reaching a climax, and finally ending.

4.1 Opening Section

There are usually two ways to introduce psychological speeches: using questions to stimulate the audience's thinking, or the speaker's story to attract the audience's interest. It is usually not the main topic of the speech and does not occupy too many paragraphs in the speech. However, it is an essential part of a speech, and the introduction section usually takes up 1/6 or less of the speech time. Through such a one question, one answer, or a story, presenting arguments, the content will naturally have a deep expansion. A good beginning often determines the direction of a speech. Therefore, similar to writing an article, the beginning of a speech usually needs to arouse the interest of both the reader and the audience. Only when this part reaches a high level of psychological interest from the audience can the following speech be more fluent and natural.

From the perspective of empathy and identification, speakers need the audience to actively participate in the construction of the text. In the introduction section, in order to attract the audience, the questions raised and the stories told by the speaker often align with people's common interests or emotional needs. After the audience and speaker have emotional resonance, they will choose to accept the following speech content, which is a two-way selection process.

In the TED speech "Getting stuck in the negatives" (TED: 2017), the speaker's first sentence is "Hi everyone. Oh my goodness, I wish I could dance, but I can't, and you really don't want me to dance." Through simple opening remarks, the audience's sense of distance was eliminated, and the speech entered a relaxed atmosphere. Then, she directly introduced the topic of the speech, "So now I think I would talk a little today about how people think." Next, the speaker used a combination of illustrations and stories to introduce the argument. On the screen, a picture titled "A week in the life of an academic..." is displayed. Under the title, "Stickman" presents in a dynamic linear form the speaker's experiences of several stages over a few days, as well as the changes in her emotional and psychological state. Finally, she proposed the question "why does a failure see to stick in our minds so much longer than a success?", to arouse people's thinking. Then she asked, "Will our thoughts stay on negative things?" The speaker spent one and a half minutes introducing the speech theme through a combination of storytelling and questioning, setting a relaxed tone for the entire speech and greatly reducing the audience's resistance to the topic of "negative emotions".

4.2 Expanding Section

The second part is the main body of the speech, which aims to achieve emotional identification with the audience. The speaker usually adopts a narrative strategy that combines theory and case studies to make the audience accept psychological knowledge from a scientific and rational perspective, while case studies resonate with the audience from a sensory perspective in reality. After entering the main part of the speech, relying solely on data accumulation is far from achieving the expected effect. What the audience needs most is clear and hierarchical logic. In psychology speeches, there are three main forms of argument development and argumentation: the first is to present disciplinary concepts and use examples to illustrate, provide examples or explanations of psychological phenomena or experiments, and then explain the scientific basis. In the demonstration, appropriate conversion of the three forms can achieve better results (Tan Yanzhi, 2019).

Taking the TED speech "Inside the Mind of a Procrastinator" (TED: 2019) as an example, in the argumentative section, the speaker sets comparisons everywhere to guide the audience to establish "identification by antithesis". The speaker

proposed, "I want to explain to the non-procrastinators in the world, what goes on in the head of the procrastinators of the world... Then my thesis is that the brain of procrastinators is actually different from other people." Then he compared his brain with that of non-procrastination patients through an MRI laboratory and found significant differences in the results. Then, with the help of pictures, he explained step by step that there is a "rational decision-maker" in people's brains, but the difference is that the "instant gratification monkey" in procrastinators usually dominates decision-making. The speaker found a very suitable entry point and explanatory form in this complex topic, which is to analyze the different thoughts in the minds of procrastinators and non-procrastinators as the main body, using vivid metaphors and images to explain. In the process of explanation, clear logic and progressive analysis firmly capture the attention of the audience. In this section, the speaker pays special attention to the emotional and psychological identification of the audience.

4.3 Ending Section

The length of the ending part of a psychological speech is usually similar to the beginning part and does not require too much writing. Compared to writing, the conclusion of a speech does not need to be summarized and repeated in the form of long paragraphs. Simple sublimation is far more meaningful than repeated summarization. Compared to other types of speeches, psychological speeches require the audience's participation and resonance, so how to end the entire speech naturally becomes the focus of this part.

Taking the TED speech "Control Your Free Time" (TED: 2017) as an example, the speech mainly analyzes various issues related to time management in modern life, including learning, life, family, and other aspects. In addition, the speaker also provided corresponding suggestions on how to save time and make reasonable use of it. Finally, she concluded that "we don't need so much time to do wonderful things, but most of the fragmented time is spent on using mobile phones or unimportant things." In the final sentence of the speech, the theme was further elevated, "I truly believe this. There is time. Even if we are busy, we have time for what materials. When we focus on what materials, we can build the lives we want in the time we've gone. Thank you." The speaker uses six "We" words in a row, using the form of "identification by inaccuracy" to lead the audience

into their expectations for the future, clarifying that obtaining a better life through better control of free time is the ultimate goal of people's time control. Adding the strategy of "identification by inaccuracy" at the end can deepen the theme better through emotional resonance, which is also the simplest and most effective strategy.

5. CONCLUSION

The important purpose of psychological speeches is to persuade the audience and reflect on their own lives through the speech. In order to achieve the purpose of persuasion, the speaker first needs to establish a trustworthy image in the narration and win the trust of the audience. Applying the empathetic identification, identification by antithesis, and identification by inaccuracy in the "identification" theory to the introduction, opening, and ending parts of a speech can effectively construct and achieve the effect of "identity". Speakers can better express their ideas and achieve the goal of persuasion. Compared to the audience, it is easier to obtain more information and emotionally identify with the speaker's speech content.

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