

An Interpersonal Pragmatics Study of Identity Construction in New Media Advocacy in Higher Education

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Keywords: New Media in Higher Education, Promotional Discourse, Discursive Identity, Relationship Management, Interpersonal Functions

Abstract: This study takes the tweets of the official WeChat public number of Nanjing Tech University as the corpus, and based on identity theory and relational management theory, it explores the identity construction and the implementation of interpersonal management function in the publicity of new media in colleges and universities. It is found that the publisher of the university public number constructs the identities of honourer, campus life recorder, information sharer, talent recruiter, spiritual and cultural communicator, announcement notifier and safety reminder by using the three dimensions of the discursive domain, discourse domain, and the relationship management strategy of the speech-acting domain, in order to carry out the corresponding interpersonal management functions, including shaping the positive face of the institution, protecting the fairness and contact rights of the audience, and realizing the construction of university publicity and harmonious relationship. In order to achieve the interactive goals of university publicity and harmonious relationship building, the publisher of the public number dynamically constructs discursive identities to shape a good image of the university, which improves the effectiveness of information dissemination, enhances the interaction between teachers and students, and promotes the construction of campus culture.

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of the Internet, the way colleges and universities adopt to disseminate news is also changing. Many colleges and universities have opened new media platforms to achieve the purpose of announcement, information sharing, recruitment and other purposes, to promote communication with students and show a good image of colleges and universities. The publicity of colleges and universities in the new media environment involves language, music, video and other different ways. Taking WeChat as an example, publishers mainly use language to build different linguistic identities and maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the correct use of language plays a crucial role in shaping the image of universities through tweets.

College public number tweets use language as a carrier to carry out effective virtual communication with public number subscribers. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical

significance to develop the study of new media discourse in colleges and universities under the threshold of interpersonal pragmatics for the publicity and promotion of colleges and universities. Guided by the identity theory of Chen Xinren (2013)^[1] and the relationship management theory of Spencer-Oatey (2008)^[2]. This study explores the identity construction and the use of relationship management strategies of publishers in college public tweets, and elaborates on their implementation of interpersonal management functions, with a view to providing references for the use of college new media publicity discourse strategies, the implementation of their functions and the enhancement of their identity construction .

2. Background of the Study

The concept of identity originated in sociology, and with the development of disciplines such as communication, conversation analysis and pragmatics, the academic understanding of identity has shifted from essentialism to constructivism (Chen Xinren 2013)^[1], which views it as a dynamic and variable communicative attribute. Interpersonal pragmatics theory states that communicators construct identities and regulate relationships through discourse strategies (Spencer-Oatey 2008^[2]; Haugh 2013^[3]; Culpeper & Haugh 2014^[4]), and that identities and relationships interact with each other in communication (Arundale 2010)^[5]. Existing studies have explored the association between identity construction and relationship management from an interpersonal pragmatics perspective, for example, Li Chengtuan and Ran Yongping (2017)^[6] analysed the connection between professional identity and interpersonal relationships through argumentative discourse, Jing Xiaoping (2022)^[7] studied the identity construction strategies in the discourse of the elderly, and Huang Jingjing and Li Kesheng (2023)^[8] analysed the function of the cultural and tourism new media in constructing discursive identities through relationship management strategies. However, most of the existing studies focus on face-to-face communication or personal written discourse, lack attention to institutional discourse, especially the publicity discourse of new media in universities, and the research methodology is mainly qualitative, with insufficient quantitative analysis.

As an important platform for information sharing and cultural dissemination, the new media in colleges and universities, with its virtual communication mode based on text tweets, requires publishers to use discourse strategies to achieve the target effect. Based on a corpus of tweets from university public numbers, this study adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to summarise the themes and count the percentage of identity types, exploring the dynamic construction of publishers' identities and their impact on university publicity and the construction of harmonious interpersonal relationships. By expanding the research scope and methodology of discursive identity and relationship management, this study aims to provide new perspectives and references for interpersonal discourse research on institutional discourse.

3. Analytical Framework

During communication, individuals actively choose and construct discursive identities to meet specific communicative needs, and achieve interpersonal relationship management through discourse strategies (Chen Xinren 2013^[1]; Locher 2013^[9]). The relationship management framework proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2008)^[2] covers five strategy domains (acting with words, discourse, participation, discourse, and nonverbal) and three management dimensions (Face, Social Rights and Obligations, and Interaction Goals), revealing the dynamic connection between identity construction and relationship management. Based on discursive identity theory and relationship management theory, this paper focuses on university new media public number tweets, analyses how publishers dynamically construct discursive identities through strategies (e.g. epithets, intonation, rhetoric, and speech acts) in the discourse domain, the discourse domain, and the

act-with-speech domain, and explores their roles in face management, social rights and obligations management, and interaction goal management, in order to reveal their utility in constructing harmonious interpersonal relationships. The study adopts Nvivo12 for word frequency statistics and thematic classification, and analyses the dynamics of discursive identity construction and its impact on interpersonal relationship management in university new media publicity with examples.

4. Research Design

4.1 Description and Analysis of the Corpus

New media is widely used for its low cost, convenience and rich content, and WeChat public number, as a representative platform with a large user group, has become an important channel for information dissemination. This paper takes the public tweets of Nanjing Tech University (NJTU) as the research object to explore the identity construction and relationship management in the new media publicity of universities. As a key construction university in Jiangsu Province, Nanjing Tech University has a high viewership of its public tweets, which is an important bridge of communication between the university and teachers and students. The study selected 108 tweets published from November 2023 to March 2024 to establish a corpus of 146,032 words, covering multiple categories such as notices, honours, information, campus life, etc., to ensure the timeliness and diversity of the corpus. The study adopts Nvivo12 for word frequency statistics and thematic classification, and analyses the strategies in the corpora domain (address, tone, rhetoric) and the domain of doing things with words (speech acts) with examples to explore the dynamic construction of discursive identities, and analyses their utility in constructing harmonious interpersonal relationships from the three dimensions of face management, management of social rights and obligations, and management of interactional goals.

4.2 Research Questions

In order to explore the construction of identity in the new media publicity discourse in higher education, this study intends to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do publishers of "Nanjing Tech University" construct identities through relationship management strategies? What kind of identities are constructed?
- 2) Nanjing Tech University What interpersonal management functions are performed by the identities constructed by the publishers of "Nanjing Tech University"

5. Analysis and Discussion of Results

5.1 Discourse Identity Construction and Relationship Management Strategies of "Nanjing Tech University" Publishers

5.1.1 Discourse Identities Constructed by Discourse Domain Strategies

The discourse domain in the relationship management strategy points to the discourse content and discourse structure in the interaction, including topic selection, topic management, and the structure and sequence of messages (Yuan Zhounmin 2016) ^[10]. This topic selection reflects the identity management work of the communicator with a view to constituting the target discourse identity. The publisher of "Nanjing Tech University" takes the public subscribers, i.e. the audience, as the communicative object, and independently chooses and manages the topics and contents to construct the discourse identity. The word frequency statistics of the corpus are carried out by

Nvivo12, and the high-frequency word lists are obtained by eliminating imaginary words and numbers, and combining synonyms for querying. Among them, the top-ranked words "work", "university", "student", "Nanjing" "college" "study" "engineering university" "activities" "Jiangsu" "Participate" "Obtain" "Project" "Competition" The words "innovation" show the main topics of tweets, including notices, announcements, admissions campaigns, and so on. Their word frequency statistics converge into a word cloud shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1: NJTU public tweets high-frequency words word cloud.

Table 1: Coding results of "Nanjing Tech University" public tweets.

Root Node Type of Discourse Identity	Secondary Node Theme of Discourse	Primary Node Content of Discourse	Total Nodes	Percentage
Honouree	Student Honours Recognition Faculty and Staff Honours and Recognition School Honours and Recognition	Students, Work, Practices, Competition Guidance, Programme	1253	39.25 per cent
Campus Life Recorder	Campus View Campus Activities	Campus Life, University, Youth	791	22.7 per cent
Information Sharer	Employment counselling sharing Exam Tips and Tricks Life Tips and Tricks	Work, Activities, Conducted, Centres, Associations	508	14.98 per cent
Spiritual and Cultural Communicators	Patriotic Ideology	Innovation, Development, Technology, Country Revitalisation	299	11.9 per cent
Notifier	Examination Notice Holiday Notice Event Notification	Candidates, Exam, Time, Service, Arrangements	216	4.53 per cent
Security Alerts	life safety property security	Safety, Precautions, Exercise, Keep it up, Campus.	107	3.62 per cent
Recruiter	School Staff Recruitment Public Number Operation Recruitment	Engineering, Science, Talent, National Programme	95	1.87 per cent

The word frequency preliminarily analysis the tendency of the discourse in the process of college

new media publicity. It can't more precisely indicate the content of college new media publicity and distribution of pragmatic identity construction. So it is necessary to further manually encode the corpus. Taking the article theme as the root node, calculate the type of discourse identity constructed by the new media in colleges. Then the secondary nodes are formed through classification, merging and theme refining. Finally, count the frequency of occurrence and proportion of keywords in different themes, the results are shown in Table 1.

As shown in the figure, the identity of honour recognisers accounts for the highest proportion (39.25%), indicating that the publishers focus on recognising honours, such as recognising outstanding students, recognising outstanding staff and celebrating the honours and achievements won by the school. On the one hand, it can show the school's advantages in cultivating talents, on the other hand, it can set an example for everyone to learn from and inspire people. Campus life recorders accounted for the second largest proportion (22.7%), recording the beauty of the campus in four seasons, sharing colourful activities on campus, and recording the colourful life of NUIST as a friend. By constructing the identity of information sharer (14.98%), publishers deliver useful information to every student and staff in time, helping every member of the University to obtain the information they need in the first time independently. When building the identity of a spiritual and cultural communicator (11.9%), publishers focus on promoting the main theme and spreading positive thoughts to subscribers. When constructing the identity of announcement notifier (4.35%), the publisher builds up a more authoritative discourse identity from the perspective of "above vs. below" to enhance the credibility and persuasiveness of the announcements. Although the proportion of the linguistic identity of safety reminders is not large (3.62%), the content is comprehensive, including fire, electricity, cold weather, fraud and addiction. In addition, the publisher also assumes the identity of talent recruiter, conveying certain recruitment information.

5.1.2 Discourse Identities Constructed by Stylistic Domain Strategies

The stylistic domain involves the communicator's choice of tone, vocabulary, syntax and address according to the occasion (Yuan Zhoumin 2016)^[10]. New media tweets in colleges and universities use different stylistics due to the diversity of content: announcements and notices use serious stylistics, such as "our school", "candidates" and other formal addresses; honours and recognition and safety reminders mostly use neutral stylistics, such as "we" to bring the distance closer; consulting and sharing and campus life, on the other hand, choose a friendly language style, such as "editor", "everyone" and other informal address, to enhance the affinity and empathy (Chen Xinren 2013)^[11]. Through the choice of language styles, publishers dynamically adjust their identities to achieve effective interaction with the audience.

(1) Our school was pleased to win 3 national gold awards, 1 silver award and 2 bronze awards in this competition. The number of national gold awards and the total number of national awards have reached a record high, let's take a look together.

(2) As we move forward, we always neglect to record the little moments in our lives. But dear treasure, remember to slow down and feel with your heart.

(3) Candidates' security check is set up in front of the Tonghe Building, which is uniformly reached through Shenyi North Road (i.e. the section from the library intersection to the Tonghe Building). All candidates are required to enter the waiting area after passing the security check. Candidates who deliberately avoid the security check will be dealt with seriously in accordance with the relevant regulations once they are found.

The use of indicatives is influenced by culture, power and communicative distance, and is often used to express politeness or to bring social distance closer (Fu Dongmei 2016)^[11]. The first-person collective perspective "we" has an empathic effect and enhances the infectiousness of discourse. For example, publishers refer to themselves as "we" to enhance the audience's sense of immersion; the

use of "Dear" draws the distance closer, reflecting a sense of intimacy; and "Candidate" builds formal discursive distance and enhances Authoritative. Through the dynamic choice of indicative language, the publisher flexibly adjusts the identity and relationship to achieve effective communication.

(4) 2024 winter holiday period, in order to ensure the normal conduct of daily work, the school departments for teachers and students to serve the specific arrangements are as follows:

(5) This morning out of the door you are not also as shown in the picture shrinking small neck, wrapped tightly in the cotton jacket tucked into the small hand, stomping the small feet. Small warm reminder: from today onwards, the temperature drops cold wave warning, wind warning came one after another in the South University of Technology you have a few sets of winter? Come on! Today we start to self-heat to do a little sun of their own!

(6) The campus of NJUT has painted "the greatest oil painting" with delicate strokes, believe it or not, NUT has already been full of gold.

(7) Early in the morning, push open the window, in front of the eyes into a world of silver. Excited editorial even shouted three times: too beautiful! Too beautiful! It's so beautiful! Such a beautiful first snow, of course, to share with you to see!

Styles are pragmatic paradigms constrained by the functional domain of language (Ding Jinguo 2009)^[12], and formal stylistics avoid emotive language, personal pronouns and colloquial expressions (Gao Xia 2021)^[13]. Example (4) adopts formal stylistics without pronouns to show the identity of the public notifier and enhance credibility; Examples (5)-(7) are informal stylistics, which use intonation, exclamations and the title "editor" to bring the distance closer and enhance emotional resonance. The publisher flexibly uses the language style to dynamically construct the identity and achieve effective interaction with the audience.

5.1.3 Discursive Identity Constructed by the Speech-Acting Matter Domain Strategy

The domain of acting with words refers to verbal behaviours that positively or negatively affect relationships, and related strategies include verbal behaviour choice, degree of direct-indirectness, and escalating or de-escalating language use (Spencer-Oatey 2008)^[2]. This domain involves the enactment of relationship threatening, relationship enhancing speech acts such as apologising, requesting, praising and so on (Yuan Zhoumin 2016)^[10]. In this corpus, publishers mostly construct different discourse identities with speech acts such as appreciation, encouragement, blessing, thanks, etc., and also use speech acts such as instruction, persuasion, etc., to achieve discourse purposes under specific themes.

(8) this sunny big boy is the best in the profession, has won the school comprehensive first-class scholarship, five times the school comprehensive second-class scholarship, a 2022 "Yu Zhen Scholarship", "Presidential Scholarship", "three good student standard bearer", "ten outstanding young students", "provincial outstanding student cadres" and other awards won, recommended for exemption from graduate study will go to Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics for further study. Three good students," "Ten Outstanding Young Students", "Provincial Outstanding Student Cadre" and other awards, recommended for exemption from graduate school will go to Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics for further study.

(9) The official microblogging site edited this tweet with full enthusiasm to send good wishes to all of you, wishing you all the best in the new year, everything can be expected, blessed with warmth in all seasons, smooth and well-being.

(10) We should keep a normal mind and not be too afraid of the physical test. The purpose of the physical test is not to create anxiety, but to guide us to exercise diligently, pay attention to health, and avoid becoming "brittle college students".

Example (8) belongs to the Appreciation speech act, in which the publisher lists a series of

achievements made by the outstanding student, which expresses the publisher's positive evaluation of the student, and the use of escalation enhances the effect of praise, which expands the positive impact of this type of speech act (Spencer-Oatey 2008)^[2], and builds up the identity of the honourable recognizer. Example (9) is a blessing speech act, which constructs the identity of a friend with warm words, and at the same time disseminates information about the New Year, constructing the discursive identity of an information disseminator. Example (10) is a persuasive speech act, which takes care of students' precautions on the side of the body, and uses the popular Internet buzzword "crispy college student" to bring the distance between students closer and make the persuasive act more acceptable.

5.2 Interpersonal Management Functions Implemented by the Public Publisher's Discourse Identity

In interpersonal communication, the deeper motivation for identity construction is interpersonal discourse, and identity construction carries out interpersonal discourse construction at the same time. Verbal communication aims to convey information, construct target discursive identities, and realise interpersonal management functions. Spencer-Oatey classifies the interpersonal management functions performed by conversationalists in verbal communication into three categories: face management, management of social rights and obligations, and management of the purpose of interaction. The boom of the Internet has made the study of interpersonal pragmatics pay more and more attention to the problems in virtual communication and its social functions. The publisher of the public number of Nanjing Tech University dynamically constructs the discursive identity, shows the style of the University, convenes benign interactions with subscribers, shapes a positive institutional face, maintains the audience's right to fairness and mutual reciprocity, and realises the goals of school publicity, message dissemination, and liaison of emotions.

In terms of face management, publishers use appreciation strategies to shape positive faces and highlight the school's good appearance. For example, the identity of the honourable commendator accounts for the highest proportion, listing the honourable achievements of teachers and students, and demonstrating the school's disciplinary quality and talent cultivation standards. Meanwhile, publishers use direct-drive discourse in important notices, which threatens negative face but reduces negative impact through strategies such as blessing.

In the management of social rights and obligations, publishers focus on safeguarding the audience's rights to fairness and reciprocity. As information sharers, publishers indirectly persuade students with a friendly and humorous tone and provide diversified messages to meet the needs of audience autonomy. As recorders of campus life, publishers enhance the sense of participation and sharing through interactive invitations and quotes from the audience, such as inviting them to share their style of dress or quoting their students' messages to enhance emotional resonance.

In terms of communication purpose management, publishers achieve multiple goals by dynamically constructing discursive identities. The identity of honourer is used to promote the university's first-class academic level and teaching quality; the identities of announcement publisher, information sharer and safety reminder ensure that information is conveyed in a timely manner; and the identities of spiritual and cultural communicator and campus life recorder care for students' physical and mental health and enhance emotional contact by sharing details of campus life.

In summary, the publisher of the public number of Nanjing Tech University provides a demonstration of new media publicity in universities by flexibly applying discourse strategies and dynamically constructing identities to effectively realise face management, rights maintenance and communicative goals.

6. Conclusion

In the new media context, the publisher of "Nanjing Tech University" public number dynamically constructs discursive identities, builds a harmonious relationship with the audience, achieves the purpose of communication, and promotes the construction of campus culture. Based on the theory of discursive identity and relationship management, this paper analyzes the seven discursive identities constructed by publishers, which are: honourer, campus life recorder, information sharer, talent recruiter, spiritual culture disseminator, announcement notifier, and safety reminder. In the process of constructing discursive identities, the publisher implements interpersonal management functions, releasing notices and announcements with authority, promoting the school with appreciation, and caring for students as a friend. It not only shapes a positive institutional face, but also communicates and interacts with the audience in a friendly way, safeguarding their right to fairness and contact.

This study is of significance in guiding university new media publishers to construct identity, improve information dissemination ability, and shape positive institutional face, and it also enriches to some extent the research on identity construction under the perspective of interpersonal pragmatics. In the future, the variable of views can be added to further quantitatively analyse what is a worthwhile, high-quality tweet for university new media that students are willing to read.

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