Discursive Struggle in Social Media from the Perspective of Theory of Communicative Action

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Abstract: With the development of the mobile Internet, people are overwhelmed with the upgrading of social media platforms and functions. This undoubtedly provides users with multiple and open access to interaction, infiltrates new ways of social networking. This important change not only presents considerable opportunities for the new age society but also creates the "perfect platform" for the struggle for social media discourse transferred from offline. However, how this transfer can further exert the discourse struggle of social communication media while continuing the previous social interaction needs to be reconsidered. The process of intensive interaction between social media and social development strengthens the possibility of traditional discursive struggle. This also shows that although the forms of social interaction have changed, they have not changed the basic reality of human social interaction. This interactive process of discourse and struggle that occurs in social interaction continues to deepen, evolve, continue and reconstruct the discursive struggle. If we take Habermas' theory of communicative action as the discursive framework, and take the discursive struggle in social media as the communicative variable in the "public sphere", then we can find that the key factors that affect the emergence and evolution of discursive struggle are relative to the model that the "ego" integrates into social media for his or her discursive struggle.

Keywords: Social Media, Discursive Struggle, Habermas, Communicative Rationality

1. Introduction

At present, mobile internet technology has been applied in mobile social communication in the world. Social media technology endows a new meaning to every individual as an "individual". As the American scholar Nicholas Negroponte said:"In being digital I am me, not a statistical subset." [1] he dialogue between people appearing in social media reconstructs the traditional interpersonal communicative paradigm, resulting in a new "network discourse". This new dialogue follows the rule of biological mode of production and records the changes in the media environment. Obviously, whether traditional dialogue or new communication on social media platforms, without exception, presents relationship-needs (self-shaping, emotional management, interpersonal communication, social interaction, social reward), and requirements (environmental awareness, personal development, leisure and entertainment) and service needs (online services, online-and-offline services) [2]. These needs and requirements should be fulfilled at the discursive level. To explore the struggle of discourse and manifest it clearly, it is necessary to study resistant discourse in sociology and political science. Some scholars have proposed that it should be defined as informal and irrational expression standing on the opposite side of the political mainstream. Obviously, the label of "irrational" and "political opposites" undoubtedly depicts the "negative" portrait of the resistant discourse. The development of the internet has blessed the legitimacy of resistant discourse. The paper will classify discursive struggle as the struggle for the rights of expression. This struggle is realized by expressing personal thinking on all kinds of media, which is different from the mainstream ideology and public opinion. This expression expands the denotation of the events that differentiates from public opinions, Interests of this expression refers to the exploration of all aspects of politics, economy, and culture of the whole society.

2. Communication and Discursive Struggle

People from different cultural backgrounds differ from each other in values and beliefs. Culture is an important element in the discursive struggle, it can arise conflicts in social media. Culture is an extremely complex word, and there are different opinions about it. According to incomplete statistics, at least 164 separate definitions of what the word 'culture' could refer to. [3] Although there are so many differences in the definition of the meaning of the culture, it is undeniable that it affects human social behavior and basic beliefs, and determines the recognition of some norms of behavior. It also determines the basic way for people to acquire knowledge. Accordingly, the artistic achievements, thinking habits, laws, and moral norms of human society are all marked with the brand of culture. It can be said that culture determines the acceptable behavior in society, which is not only the criterion of behavior, dress, language, and style, but also the template of social group expectation. In other words, culture, to a certain extent, determines everyone's daily life, such as food, clothing, housing, and transportation, as well as everyone's pursuit of values and beliefs, and affects people's emotional decision-making, choice, and catharsis. As culture is closely connected with its own nation, it not only becomes the symbol of the nation, but also the foundation for the nation to gain a foothold in the world. During the personal communication with others, there is no doubt that these cultures have not only not disappeared from each other's original culture, but have absorbed each other while maintaining their own independent development. However, in the real world, diversity of culture brings forth many kinds of communication, but if the communication is transferred by way of mobile internet, this kind of conflict will be more dramatic than ever.

People who live in society have to communicate with others. In Habermas' view, people should deal with the surrounding natural environment and objects, and constantly transform them to meet the requirements of human development on the one hand; people should also deal with people around them to form interaction, rather than living alone, on the other hand. Therefore, human society is shown as the processes of labor and the communication, and it is the communication that enables people to replace "the animal status system" with "a system of social norms that presupposed language." [4] According to Habermas' understanding, human behavior can be divided into "non-social behavior" and "social behavior" according to his activities. Individual instrumental operation of the natural world is a kind of non-social action. Social behavior involves the interaction of at least two or more subjects, which can be divided into "strategic action" and "communicative action". The difference between these two actions lies in their orientations to "illocutionary aims without reservation" [5]. In Habermas's view: "I count as communicative action those linguistically mediated interactions in which all participants pursue illocutionary aims, and *only* illocutionary aims, with their mediating acts of communication." [5] Compared with communicative actions, strategic actions, theatrical actions and normative actions are all goal-oriented. "Reaching understanding" means that at least two subjects with verbal, and behavioral abilities understand a language expression together. If "understanding" is regarded as a result, then the result should be achieved through "communication". The reached understanding can also be called a "consensus", although it contains the possibility of "seeking common ground while reserving differences". From Habermas' analysis on communicative action, we can see that language has obtained relative independence. Habermas further finds that language itself contains a kind of rationality which is called communicative rationality. Habermas pointed out that the concept of communicative rationality includes three levels: first, the relationship between the cognitive subject and the world of events or facts; second, the relationship between the practical subjects in the interaction; third, the relationship between a mature and painful subject (in the sense of Feuerbach) and his own inner essence. Here, the first level of "the world of events or facts" is the objective world, the second level refers to the social world, and the third level refers to the subjective world. There are validity requirements in these three levels, that is, the truth requirements associated with the objective world, the rightness requirements associated with the social world, and the sincerity requirements corresponding to the subjective world. These three levels are combined in the process of communication with language as the medium. Therefore, compared with the traditional rationality, this kind of rationality does not exist independently in the subject itself, but in the use of language. This kind of communicative rationality "does not fall under the idealistic spell of an universality that triumphs over the particular and the singular," but "asserts itself in the medium of language." [6] Communicative actions can occur only when the three effectiveness requirements corresponding to the objective world, social world, and subjective world are met at the same time. These three worlds are unified in any communicative action, and the three worlds unified in any communicative action form a "trinity" structure, that is, the "life- world" that Habermas repeatedly emphasized later. And it is precise because of this connection, Habermas believes that the two concepts of communicative action and lifeworld complement each other.

In the first developmental stage of social communicative media, the medium of communicative action is integrated into the intersubjectivity of the participants. Speakers constantly adjust their own social discourse and pursue consensus through judging and speculating the purposes of others. At the end of the last century, a variety of social thoughts emerged, the discursive struggle for the interest demands continued to emerge, and grew with the help of BBS, forums, and other social media. This is like what Noel Neumann called "the spiral of silence" in reality. [7] In contrast, the anonymity of social media reduces netizens' concerns about their communicative action to some extent,

but it still plays a role. The "spiral of silence" emphasizes the external pressure of the real world, while intersubjectivity focuses on people's subjective factors, and does not care about the formation of public opinion. During the experiencing or observing many discourses, netizens driven by the behaviors of "personal judgment-adjustment-re-judgment" try to achieve the unity of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and finally, they can reach a consensus with the "other". [8] Such a cycle often combines with social problems, the technological development of media, diversification of platforms, and so on, and some of discursive struggles inadvertently produce, continue or create new meanings on the social media.

Another issue that is worth paying attention to at this stage is the shift from traditional media to contemporary social media. Contemporary social media are not only new media, but also platforms for a new economical form, but also a new social form. Most of the discursive struggles are related intersubjectively in the face of the "other" (that is, a high degree of reception of external information), which also affects that these discourses need to deal with more uncertainty. It is more obvious that when there is a public health emergency, people consider their own safety, believe in the idea of "believing it exists rather than believing it does not exist at all", and emphasize that they are in a "risk avoidable area" with confrontational discourses. As Susan Sontag mentioned in the work of *AIDs and Its Metaphors*, "We all know the truth, every one of us. We live in a time of a plague that seems to have never come to our nation. We can pretend it doesn't exist, or it exists only to others, and our lives are as usual as if we don't know anything about it." [9] The people's self-suggestion is meaningful, but before the official announcement, everyone is skeptical or has no definite answer to whether the prevention or treatment measures are really effective. However, the credibility advantage of traditional media has not diminished. Traditional media began to intervene, and the comprehensive analysis and interpretation of traditional media made rumors no room for survival. [10] At this stage, traditional media shows its advantages over contemporary social media in terms of its profession and authority.

3. Rapid Growth of Discursive Struggle via Social Media

Habermas believes that any person in a communicative action, in the course of any language act, must meet several general validity requirements, and assumes that these requirements can be verified or fulfilled. Specifically, these validity requirements include: one is the requirement of truth, which requires that the statements made to the objective world must be true and reliable; the second is the requirement of rightness, which requires that the action must conform to social norms and ensures the legitimacy of the established interpersonal relationship; the third is the requirement of sincerity, that is, the intention of the speaker and listener is

sincere and credible. If actors can meet these three validity requirements at the same time in the process of speech, they will reach a consensus on speech acts and can reach an agreement based on consensus, to coordinate their relationship with each other. Habermas' theory of communicative action is developed based on modern linguistics, Meade's theory of symbolic interaction, Weber's analysis of rationality and so on. He reveals the communicative rationality contained in communicative action, which not only changes from the subject's ability to repel others by self-defined standards to the ability of intersubjectivity to accommodate others by mutually recognized norms. It also changes from subjective self-returning ability to intersubjective normative ability. Therefore, it is positive guiding significance to solve the dilemma of social media communication under the guidance of communicative rationality. The three validities involved in communicative rationality are critical to the successful communication. At the same time, communicative action is a kind of linguistical act, and these characteristics are applicable to the dialogue of anti-competitive discourse.

With the rapid development of the Internet, people have entered the self-media era represented by blogs and video-sharing sites. [11] Great changes have taken place in virtual social networking: individuals have independent platforms for publishing information and can even make their voices on their own social platforms by way of real-name authentication, which is essentially different from the anonymous social media era. In this context, opinions-leaders in social media continue to emerge. The anonymous "backstage" of Big V, which used to be active on the Internet, have appeared before the "foreground" of public vision and become a "dominant group of social goals" in social media. As a result, "fan economy" has developed rapidly, which has changed the developmental trend of the modern cultural industry and expanded the new imagination of the functional hypothesis of "agenda- setting" in the traditional media era.

Based on Habermas' communication theory, if actors can meet the three validity requirements of truth, rightness, and sincerity at the same time in the process of communication, they will reach a consensus on speech acts and can reach an agreement based on consensus, to coordinate the relationship between them. In terms of the requirement of "rightness", this is obvious in the blog era. Fans supporting Big Vs get spiritual and emotional interaction with their idols through various ways such as following, commenting, retweeting, likes, and private messages. They only care about the "communication" itself but do not pay so much attention to the correctness of their words. Big Vs' capital to gain fans' "understanding" is their reputation in their respective fields, which is the rule of the spiritual relationship between the two sides. If Big Vs are far away from fans' expectations (such as their own misdeeds), fans will cancel their attention. While Big Vs are fan suckers, they are also willing to express their views on hot social events on social platforms. Big Vs pay attention to public discourse, and the role of "opinion leaders" will attract more people's attention or continue to pay

attention to some issues and urge some things to be resolved effectively. However, the "non-professional" opinions expressed by Big Vs in the non-professional field may mislead fans, thus unconsciously promoting the production and dissemination of rebellious words. [12] This will undoubtedly produce "fertile ground" for the growth of resistant discourse. Although the continuous growth of resistant discourse does not necessarily involve political demands, the complexity of politics, economy, culture, and social ecology makes it point to diversified issues and trigger a wave of public opinions.

4. Innovative Development of Discursive Struggle via Social Media

Marshall McLuhan believes that human society creates tools, which in turn act on human beings. People's social behaviors perhaps cannot be underestimated in the sake of impacts that accompany with the emergence of new technological media on human society. [13] In 2010, with the development of network communicative technology, Weibo has become a new way of emotional communication, this technology of media has achieved a milestone breakthrough. In recent years, smartphone and wireless mobile network technology also have made mobile social communication represented by Wechat, QQ, facebook and so on become an important way of life for netizens. Everyone has entered the "microphone" era and be infiltrated in media life.

On social media platforms, people are free to express themselves or speak freely or have a war of words. As the "post-75s", "post-80s", "post-80s" and "post-90s" age groups gradually step onto the center stage of the real society, the network discourse that highlights the characteristics of the youth group is entering the public view. It has formally become an important component of the social language system, and has a profound impact on the trend of network culture, giving new interpretative meaning to the anti-competitive discourse.

It is a basic consensus that cultural dialogue should be based on medium of language. In the his masterpiece of *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas calls purposive actions, normative regulatory actions, and dramatic actions as purposive-strategic actions, and further points out that there is a fundamental difference between communicative action and the purposive-strategic action. That is, "the concept of *communicative action* refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or by extraverbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement." [5] The emphasis on language rather than other media such as money and power is because "Language is a medium of communication that serves understanding, whereas actors, in coming to an understanding with one another so as to coordinate their actions, pursue their particular aims." [14]

Dialogue itself refers to two or more people talking in language. Contrary to the dialogue is the monologue. Dialogue is both a purpose and way. It emphasizes the input of dialogue participants. Similarly, only by making efforts to eliminate cultural misunderstandings can we promote communications between different cultures, and then achieve smooth communications among people affected by different cultures, to realize the common values of the world.

However, the differences in circumstances, mentality, and knowledge have led to the differentiation of young people, and the irrational elements of language on social media have increased. It is normal for people of different ages to tease or blacken each other in cyberspace. When the post-80s generation laments "middle-aged greasy" and "middle-aged women", the "post-90s" use a variety of "mourning" symbols to express the exclamation of aging ahead of time. "Post-00s" is the main force of emo, which implies or reflects the social collective anxiety under the pressure of life. On social media, people laugh at themselves with phrases such as "losers", "Ge You lying" in China, "useless people", "escaping shameful but useful", "Buddhism" and "lying flat", which embodies the spirit of fighting realities. [15] It poses a challenge to the traditional discourse ethics, coupled with the inevitable appearance of social contradictions under the mobile social "Skynet" so that competitive discourse is not only the expression of emotion in a specific situation. It has become a generally accepted and normal way of discourse in the whole society. [16].

At present, in the cognition of the existence of youth groups, the whole world is facing great anxiety and uncertainty. Young people seem to recognize where the boundaries of their own destiny are, and those boundaries are built by something unbroken and unavoidable before them. The expansion of the ethics of communicative discourse is to put oneself in a lower position than others and tease his own situation to achieve the purpose of "retreat for progress".

5. Conclusion

From the original level of communication, contentious discourse affects the input of external information, and people's memory, reasoning, and judgment of objects are all based on physiological communication needs. Theoretically speaking, the more active social actions and media use of social individuals are, the easier it is for the contentious discourse on social media to become an important part of their discursive system, which in turn affects their value construction and behavior patterns. From the theory of communicative action, the developmental contentious discourse is inextricably linked to the social public system by social media. To make communicative rationality play a real role in real dialogue, people must also determine a reasonable dialogue environment and dialogue procedures, so that communicative rationality as a theoretical situation can be implemented in the context of practice. It can be predicted that how to integrate social media discourse into the category of "public domain governance" will be the focus of

philosophy, politics, sociology and journalism and communication in the future.

Fund Projects

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