

The Formation Mechanism and Evaluation Framework of Scholarly Academic Discourse Power: A Postprint

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Date: 2023-04-01T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The gradual enhancement of scholars' academic discourse power represents a process of academic prosperity, and research on the theories and methods for evaluating scholars' academic discourse power has become an urgent requirement for constructing China's academic discourse system. [Method/Process] Grounded in discourse power theory, research activity lifecycle theory, and communication theory, and guided by an "element-relationship-process" framework, this study examines the various elements in academic activities and their interrelationships, and conducts analysis, identification, and quantitative evaluation of scholars' roles in the formation process of academic discourse power. [Results/Conclusions] Based on an analysis of the constituent elements of scholars' academic discourse power, this study reveals its formation mechanism and constructs a theoretical evaluation framework encompassing three dimensions: discourse leadership, discourse dissemination capacity, and discourse influence.

Full Text

Research on the Formation Mechanism and Evaluation Framework of Scholars' Academic Discourse Power

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] The gradual enhancement of scholars' academic discourse power represents a process of academic prosperity. Research on scholars' academic discourse power and its evaluation theories and methods has

become an urgent requirement for constructing China's academic discourse system. [Method/Process] Based on discourse power theory, the lifecycle theory of scientific research activities, and communication theory, this study follows an "element-relationship-process" framework to explore the various elements in academic activities and their interrelationships, and to analyze, identify, and quantitatively evaluate the role of scholars in the formation of academic discourse power. [Result/Conclusion] By analyzing the constituent elements of scholars' academic discourse power, this paper reveals its formation mechanism and constructs a theoretical evaluation framework comprising three dimensions: discourse leading power, discourse communication power, and discourse influence power.

Keywords: scholars' academic discourse power; discourse power evaluation; leading power; communication power; influence power

Classification Numbers: G250; D81

DOI: 10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2022.11.003

At the Academicians' Conference, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to innovate talent evaluation mechanisms and establish a scientific and technological talent evaluation system oriented toward innovation capability, quality, and contribution, thereby forming and implementing an evaluation system conducive to researchers' dedicated study and innovation. As creators and disseminators of scientific knowledge, scholars are the primary drivers of scientific and technological progress. Scholar evaluation influences academic titles, research awards, funding support, and numerous other aspects. An equitable and effective talent evaluation system benefits national resource allocation and talent management, while also promoting the development and improvement of evaluation science as a discipline. Consequently, scholar evaluation urgently requires enriching and innovating traditional evaluation systems and theories.

Currently, scholarly research on academic discourse power remains scarce, with most studies focusing on scholar influence. These primarily examine how research outputs are valued, recognized, and cited by others, as well as peer evaluation of academic works. Scholars have developed numerous evaluation indicators based on two fundamental metrics: publication volume and citation volume. Additionally, Altmetrics research has emerged, exploring the relationship between Altmetrics indicators and traditional citation metrics, and integrating them for comprehensive scholar evaluation. However, these evaluation indicators focus solely on the degree of recognition of research outputs by external parties, neglecting the authority of scholars as academic subjects. Moreover, "simple counting" research evaluation methods have led to problems such as "emphasizing quantity over quality," resulting in declining quality of discourse production in academic fields. Scholar evaluation urgently needs to eliminate the "Five Only" problem, abandon such simplistic evaluation methods, and instead focus on the entire construction process of the research cycle, as the magnitude of scholars' academic discourse power also serves as an important measure of academic prosperity.

A country's discourse production fundamentally depends on the state of discourse power within its academic and theoretical circles. Scholars are the primary actors in academic discourse and exert multifaceted influence on external parties. Enhancing scholars' academic discourse power constitutes the foundation and breakthrough point for strengthening China's international discourse power. Against the backdrop of accelerating globalization and intensifying international competition, the unprecedented global changes and complex international political situation have created an urgent need for China to elevate its international discourse power. Therefore, constructing an evaluation scientific theoretical, methodological, and application system for scholars' academic discourse power has become both a national development requirement and a key measure in the competition for national discourse power.

This study draws upon the lifecycle theory of scientific research activities, discourse power theory, and communication theory to explore the formation mechanism of scholars' academic discourse power and examine its constituent elements and relationships. Grounded in three aspects—the knowledge production by academic subjects, the media carriers for disseminating academic achievements, and the external cognition and acceptance of academic outputs—this paper constructs an evaluation theoretical framework for scholars' academic discourse power and preliminarily designs an evaluation indicator system, aiming to enrich scholar evaluation theory and extend previous evaluation indicators.

2 Formation Mechanism of Scholars' Academic Discourse Power

Currently, the concept of scholars' academic discourse power lacks clear and explicit definition. Scholars have only discussed the concept of academic discourse power, offering various perspectives that form certain views on its nature. Existing research emphasizes that academic discourse power is influence derived from academic discourse. Zheng Hangsheng argues that academic discourse power represents the unity of discourse rights, qualifications, and influence—the unity of discourse qualification and authority—and constitutes the influence and dominance of the academic community within its relevant academic circles. Shen Zhuanghai posits that academic discourse power refers to the dominant and controlling academic influence that corresponding academic subjects possess within certain spatiotemporal boundaries and academic fields, manifested in leading academic development trends, determining academic agenda-setting, controlling academic evaluation criteria, and dominating academic exchange patterns. Tao Yunfang believes that academic discourse power emphasizes both the discourse freedom of academic subjects (discourse rights) and their discourse authority and multifaceted influence on objects. Discourse rights refer to the freedom of speech that actors possess as subjects, while discourse power refers to the guidance, control, and persuasion that subjects exert as authoritative speakers.

This paper argues that discourse and power share an inter-constructive and symbiotic relationship, with the essence of academic discourse power being the unity of the right to speak and the power of speech in academic fields. Scholars' academic discourse power refers to scholars' gradually enhanced discourse power within the academic community through dynamic academic activities, representing an accumulative and sedimentary process. To explore the nature of scholars' academic discourse power, this study follows the research connotation of formation mechanisms along an "element-relationship-process" framework to examine the operational rules and principles of various elements and their interconnections in academic activities under the background of new open science technologies.

2.1 Formation Elements and Their Relationships

2.1.1 Formation Elements Scholars' academic discourse power manifests scholars' ability to influence or change the thoughts and behaviors of academic objects by expressing academic viewpoints. Its formation is reflected in the process of research output production, where scholars or institutions conduct research, formalize their academic thoughts and ideas into published papers, and present these achievements to the academic community and society after peer review and editorial examination, thereby accepting colleagues' scrutiny and evaluation for deeper and broader academic exchange and discussion. Drawing upon H.D. Lasswell's 5W communication model (who → says what → through what channel → to whom → with what effect), this study integrates the current research output process to analyze the formation elements of scholars' academic discourse power, identifying five indispensable elements: academic discourse subject, academic discourse content, academic discourse carrier, academic discourse object, and academic discourse effect.

- (1) **Academic Discourse Subject:** The producer of academic discourse, which can be academic institutions, organizations, groups, or individual scholars. To establish their position and identity in academic circles, discourse subjects must refine "academic discourse" to express their academic thoughts or viewpoints and make them convincing, playing a key role in dominating academic discourse power.
- (2) **Academic Discourse Content:** Knowledge systems presented in linguistic and textual forms, including concepts, terminology, and categories. This encompasses all written and oral discourses related to academic research, such as academic monographs, journal articles, dissertations, conference papers, academic speeches, reports, discussions, and interviews, reflecting topics and research concerns within academic fields.
- (3) **Academic Discourse Carrier:** The medium for academic communication and the bearer of academic discourse power. Academic publications and resource owners serve as carriers, including academic conferences and forums that facilitate peer dialogue and exchange, as well as internet and

new media platforms. Academic journals and retrieval systems constitute the primary media carriers for exercising academic discourse power.

- (4) **Academic Discourse Object:** The counterpart to the discourse subject, representing the target audience and receiver of academic discourse content—typically the entire academic community. Objects acquire discourse subjects’ voices through carriers and undergo ideological and behavioral changes, including drawing inspiration from and citing academic achievements.
- (5) **Academic Discourse Effect:** The outcomes and efficacy achieved through the application of discourse rights and power, manifested when academic discourse is accepted and recognized by the academic community and guides its concerns and research directions.

2.1.2 Element Relationships The relationships among these formation elements are illustrated in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]. Academic discourse subjects refine and summarize their viewpoints into standardized texts (e.g., academic papers) constituting discourse content. Publishing these on academic discourse carriers represents effective discourse expression. Academic discourse objects acquire and internalize this content, forming new knowledge, while expressive viewpoints transform objects into subjects. Objects’ citation and adoption behaviors provide the best evidence of favorable discourse effects.

Scholars’ academic discourse power first rests on scholars as discourse subjects—the core force driving scientific development—embodying the guiding role of authoritative speakers in scientific research. Second, it involves media carriers for displaying and disseminating academic achievements. Third, scholars’ outputs must undergo external cognition and acceptance, representing influence on objects. These three aspects jointly construct scholars’ academic discourse power, directly affecting its magnitude and scope.

2.2 Formation Process of Scholars’ Academic Discourse Power

Academic discourse power emerges in social practices related to scientific research and academic exchange. Analyzing it from the perspective of the research lifecycle facilitates comprehensive understanding. Whether in project-based or daily research activities, lifecycles exhibit characteristic stages: from conceptualization and initiation to research, completion, publication, and evaluation. Current research fields increasingly utilize new-generation network technologies and wide-area distributed high-performance computing environments, making research problems unprecedentedly complex. The research lifecycle provides a framework for defining and executing research activities, promoting the capture, analysis, organization, and management of knowledge outputs and research relationships throughout the process.

Previous studies have variously divided the research lifecycle: I. Rowlaans et al. identified four stages (idea discovery, funding application, research imple-

mentation, and outcome dissemination); E Junli et al. proposed four phases (research funding application, data management, paper writing, and outcome dissemination); Xiao Long et al. suggested four stages (idea/concept formation, project approval, publication/sharing, and management/evaluation); Xue Jingjing et al. divided it into four phases (research conception, research process, publication and sharing, and long-term preservation and utilization); Ma Chunmei identified five stages (research conception, research process, publication, preservation and sharing, and evaluation and analysis); Zhang Tian et al. outlined five phases (research question design, collaboration seeking, data collection and analysis, storage and management, submission and peer review, publication, data release and dissemination, citation and impact evaluation, and credit accumulation. Despite these variations, the most frequently occurring research contents are remarkably similar.

Based on the relationships among formation elements, this paper synthesizes the formation process of scholars' academic discourse power from the research lifecycle perspective, comprising four stages: academic discourse conception, academic discourse production, academic discourse dissemination, and academic discourse recognition, as shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. Like scientific research activities, the lifecycle presents a spirally connected and ascending pattern, where discourse power does not emerge through a top-down chain but operates through network-like organizations. Power emerges through dynamic relationship adjustments, creating and reconstructing productive practices through interaction, exerting pervasive and profound influence on discourse practices.

- (1) **Academic Discourse Conception Stage:** The initial step in generating academic discourse power. To articulate academic discourse, subjects must extensively review literature to understand research direction progress, current hotspots, and demands, analyzing multiple data sources to identify disciplinary development levels and potential directions. This corresponds to agenda-setting in discourse formation—"what to say." Researchers retrieve, access, and study relevant papers, monographs, and data resources, discovering and evaluating valuable scientific data underlying publications, selecting reusable resources for research design. Through referencing publications and data, research problems and trends are clarified, forming research outcomes. In this stage, discourse subjects identify research directions and breakthrough points from previous studies or new research projects.
- (2) **Academic Discourse Production Stage:** The advanced stage of conception and foundation for dissemination. Academic thoughts and ideas must be refined and expressed into comprehensible knowledge outputs, primarily including traditional publications and new forms such as scientific data. Traditional outputs encompass journal articles, conference papers, dissertations, monographs, and patents. Academic achievements created by researchers require peer review before publication and release. This

stage embodies discourse subjects' cognitive patterns and value orientations gaining recognition, and the moment when discourse formally exerts its leading role. Dominant ideas transform into discursive capability—the fundamental path to enhancing discourse power through strengthened legitimation.

- (3) **Academic Discourse Dissemination Stage:** Scholars or academic groups cannot generate academic discourse power without sharing achievements or receiving academic recognition. Dissemination occurs through various channels publishing research outcomes or storing published results in specific databases, which not only improves utilization rates but also enhances scholars' personal influence. Academic journals, open access, and social media represent three primary dissemination methods. While most academic journals use peer-reviewed print publications as the most common communication medium, information technology development and emerging online exchange methods (open access, blogs) have led scholars to increasingly prioritize network resources for sharing research outcomes, no longer limiting themselves to traditional print publication. Additionally, social media, as an emerging approach, is increasingly used by academic institutions to facilitate research.
- (4) **Academic Discourse Recognition Stage:** Citation occurs only after academic publication, in the later stages of the research lifecycle. In this stage, discourse objects accept and identify with subjects' discourse, which can manifest as industry or beneficiary recognition and approval of discourse providers—a form of affirmation for discourse subjects. Academic discourse power does not arise from self-proclamation in closed systems but derives from social recognition with dominant characteristics. Therefore, acknowledgment and recognition of academic achievements significantly impact researchers, including public respect for academic discourse systems, mutual recognition and respect among different academic circles, and identification with corresponding discourse systems within specific disciplines.

3 Evaluation Framework for Scholars' Academic Discourse Power

3.1 Framework Construction

Scholar academic discourse power evaluation involves identifying, recognizing, and quantifying scholars' roles in the discourse power formation process. Building upon the exploration of formation mechanisms and focusing on the five constituent elements (discourse subject, content, carrier, object, and effect), this paper proposes a theoretical evaluation framework for scholars' academic discourse power, as shown in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]. The frame-

work comprises macro-evaluation dimensions and micro-compositional elements, integrating traditional metrics and Altmetrics to derive specific evaluation indicators from a metrological perspective, ultimately forming a three-dimensional framework encompassing discourse leading power, communication power, and influence power.

- (1) **Evaluation Dimensions:** Macroscopically, throughout the entire life-cycle of research activities, scholar academic discourse power evaluation includes three dimensions: leading power, communication power, and influence power. First, discourse production and accumulation are closely linked to power operation. Discourse determines the formation of normative concepts and the interpretation of meaning systems, while discourse systems provide legitimacy for structural power. Therefore, the right to express academic discourse constitutes the foundation of academic discourse power formation. Second, power operation is intimately connected to discourse dissemination, with discourse further enhancing influence through power. Thus, the right to control discourse resources serves as the means for academic discourse power formation. Finally, discourse recognition and feedback are key to acquiring discourse power, playing the most fundamental role. Therefore, the right to dominate academic discourse effects represents the ultimate purpose of academic discourse power formation. In summary, scholars' academic discourse power primarily comprises the right to express academic discourse for knowledge production, the right to control discourse resources for knowledge dissemination, and the right to dominate discourse effects for knowledge application.
- (2) **Compositional Elements:** Microscopically, analyzing specific compositional elements of evaluation dimensions must encompass characteristics of the four stages in the discourse power formation process (conception, production, dissemination, and recognition). **Leading Power Evaluation Elements:** Academic discourse conception and production constitute the starting point of academic information dissemination. Scholars leverage their authority and knowledge accumulation advantages within the academic community to set agendas for research directions in disciplinary fields, guiding disciplinary development trends and demonstrating their academic leading power within the academic community. **Communication Power Evaluation Elements:** Robust dissemination platforms and channel media provide the hardware foundation for enhancing discourse power. Scholars actively explore new paths for academic exchange, disseminating their viewpoints to academic and industrial circles through effective channels and platforms, creating superimposed effects in the discourse dissemination process and exerting potential influence on target audiences, thereby achieving academic communication power in academic exchange activities. **Influence Power Evaluation Elements:** Discourse power largely depends on discourse itself, with different content and quality generating different discourse power. After publication and dissemination, academic viewpoints influence and change research directions and

development speeds in various scientific fields across other institutions or individuals, demonstrating scholars' academic discourse influence.

3.2 Indicator System Design

Based on scientific evaluation theory and following systematic, comprehensive, comparable, quantifiable, and operable principles, this paper designs an evaluation indicator system for scholars' academic discourse power, presented in Table 1 .

3.2.1 Academic Discourse Leading Power Academic discourse leading power refers to scholars' ability to set research agendas and guide disciplinary development directions within the academic community perspective, relying on their strength and research output capabilities. The academic discourse conception and production stages correspond to agenda-setting and frame-building in communication theory. Scholars combine their discourse strength with academic resources to lead academic discourse content, with their research achievements and directions guiding newcomers, while also demonstrating individual leadership and exemplary roles within research teams. Studies show that academic papers by Chinese Academy of Sciences members generally have greater impact than before their election, indicating that accumulated research knowledge and prestige can enhance discourse power and establish discourse weight within the community.

From a scholar evaluation perspective, academic discourse leading power can be analyzed through two elements: discourse authority and discourse strength.

Scholar Academic Discourse Authority: Specifically reflected in qualitative metrics such as academic age, academic status, professional category, title level, and research project foundation. **Scholar Academic Discourse Strength:** The leading role of scholars within research teams, manifested through discourse quantity and quality, such as scholar productivity, academic content innovation, academic cooperation patterns, fields, and scope—all evaluating scholars' academic leadership from different perspectives.

3.2.2 Academic Discourse Communication Power Academic discourse communication power represents a form of social discourse control—the power to control access to discourse resources such as media and various conferences. This allocation depends to some extent on the social status and discourse power of the allocating subject. In our globalized era, to compete for Chinese scholars' discourse power, scholars must not only enter the academic community but also make their voices heard.

Based on dissemination methods, academic discourse communication power can be divided into direct and indirect communication power. Direct communication power refers to scholars disseminating research outcomes directly through oral presentations or self-media, measurable through conference presentations,

demonstration documents, and conference posters. In modern society, particularly the internet era, discourse power has become pluralistic. Modern network media development exposes people to discourse far beyond national boundaries and various social ideologies, diversifying communication methods. Indirect communication power manifests in two ways: first, scholars' discourse published in academic journals attracts audience attention and reflection through the journals' inherent value and quality. Current academic publishing extends beyond traditional publications to include open access resources on various platforms, microblogs, blogs, datasets, and source code. Second, academic journals, building upon their intrinsic value, add internet dissemination channels, generating academic information acquisition behaviors such as browsing, collecting, and downloading, including usage metrics (video usage, social clicks, academic platform usage, Baidu Academic Search index, Google Scholar, journal reviews on academic forums) and capture metrics (community readers, social bookmarks, video subscriptions/likes, review ratings).

3.2.3 Academic Discourse Influence Power Scholar discourse influence power refers to the impact of scholars' academic discourse content (including viewpoints, ideas, concepts, methods, discoveries, facts, emotions, etc. from journals or papers) on discourse objects, which express identification through citation-based methods, demonstrating that scholars' discourse has generated influence and achieved the purpose of enhancing discourse power.

The center of discourse leading power and communication power research focuses on discourse power holders—the dominant groups. However, academic discourse power emphasizes not only the ability to speak but also the speaker's influence on others' academia, including research orientations and international academic evaluation standards. Academic objects are not passive recipients of discourse from dominant groups but possess their own discriminatory capabilities. Therefore, academic objects' identification with content constitutes a crucial component in academic discourse power evaluation.

Based on the attributes of objects' identification behaviors, scholar academic discourse influence power manifests in two aspects: academic influence and social influence.

- (1) **Academic Influence:** An important dimension reflecting academic contribution. The degree to which a scholar's papers are cited by others serves as an indicator of academic value and impact, representing a crucial measure of scholarly level. Academic influence evaluation indicators include traditional citation metrics (improved or expanded upon citation frequency, such as h-index, Author Rank, normalized impact factor) and online citation metrics (citation counts in CrossRef, PMC, WoS, Scopus, Microsoft Academic Search databases).
- (2) **Social Influence:** With the emergence of social media and changes in scholarly communication behaviors, a series of metrics measuring schol-

ars' online attention and recognition have emerged. Social influence metrics include mention metrics (video comments, social mentions/comments, blog mentions, academic platform comments, Wikipedia references) and social media metrics (likes, shares, reposts, comments on Weibo, WeChat, Facebook, Twitter).

Establishing a scientific scholar academic discourse power evaluation system to strategically enhance China's international academic discourse power has become the hope for constructing China's discourse system.

This study establishes an innovation capability, quality, and contribution-oriented scientific and technological talent evaluation system within the perspective of academic discourse power, forming an evaluation theoretical framework conducive to researchers' dedicated study and innovation. First, against the backdrop of changing academic exchange methods, this paper explores the formation mechanism of scholars' academic discourse power following the "element-relationship-process" framework, integrating scholar evaluation throughout the entire research activity lifecycle, constructing an evaluation theoretical framework that enriches current scholar evaluation theories. Second, from informetrics and scientometrics perspectives, combining evaluation science, information science, informetrics, and communication theories, this paper designs a three-dimensional evaluation indicator system encompassing academic leading power, academic communication power, and academic influence power, achieving indicator expansion and system reconstruction for traditional evaluation science. This extends current influence evaluation to discourse power evaluation, making scholar evaluation indicators more comprehensive and extensive. Future research will verify the feasibility and effectiveness of this theoretical framework through empirical analysis.

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Library and Information Service Magazine
April 6, 2022

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