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On the Post-Print of Public Expression of National Discourse

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Abstract

Purpose: To examine the attributes of public expression in national discourse, expand conceptual cognitive space for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of national discourse communication, and identify innovative implementation pathways.

Method: The concept of public expression is proposed. Through conceptual differentiation and analysis among public expression, vocal language communication, and oral communication, the public value pursuit of public expression is clarified, and its adaptability under the reconstruction of the media ecology is identified.

Results: National discourse public expression is national discourse communication in the public sphere that focuses on public issues and pursues public interests, featuring multi-level and multi-field application scenarios in the dimensions of global governance and national governance.

Conclusion: Through three pathways—enhancing discourse cognition, optimizing discourse structure, and transforming discourse style—the goal of improving the quality and effectiveness of national discourse public expression is achieved.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: On National Discourse Public Expression

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Abstract:

[Objective] This paper examines the attributes of national discourse public expression, opening conceptual space for improving the quality and efficiency

of national discourse communication while identifying innovative implementation pathways. **[Method]** The concept of public expression is proposed, and through conceptual differentiation between public expression, vocal language transmission, and oral communication, the paper clarifies the public value pursuit of public expression and its adaptability under reconstructed media ecology. **[Results]** National discourse public expression constitutes national discourse communication that occurs in public spheres, focuses on public topics, and pursues public interests, with multi-level and multi-domain application scenarios in both global governance and national governance dimensions. **[Conclusion]** The goals of improving the quality and effectiveness of national discourse public expression can be achieved through three pathways: enhancing discourse cognition, optimizing discourse structure, and transforming discourse style.

Keywords: public expression; national discourse; national strategic communication; public nature; oral communication

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Introduction

National discourse represents the concrete manifestation of national discursive power implementation, a national communication phenomenon and information form aimed at disseminating national information, shaping national image, enhancing national soft power, and addressing international and domestic issues [1]. Chen Rudong's definition encompasses three dimensions—discourse subject, discourse content, and discourse purpose—providing a relatively comprehensive delimitation of national discourse's connotation and extension. National discourse research involves theoretical construction in national discourse studies, national rhetoric, and even national communication studies, holding significant importance for improving national discourse quality and constructing national image [2]. Current research on national discourse primarily focuses on macro-level investigations of concepts, nature, connotations, extensions, and frameworks, with relatively few analyses of application scenarios and discourse practice cases. Therefore, introducing macro-level framework research into micro-level discourse practice case and scenario studies represents a new approach to deepening national discourse research.

Beyond discourse generation and management, discourse transmission constitutes a crucial method for national discourse to achieve its goals and values. The content of national discourse transmission presents multi-modal media forms including images, text, and audio-video, with the vocal language modality being a

common form of national discourse transmission. Meanwhile, reviewing existing research on vocal language transmission reveals a primary focus on media professionals such as anchors, on-site reporters, and news commentators, concentrating on mass communication scenarios. However, research remains insufficient regarding speeches by leaders, media addresses, media interviews, statements by national institution spokespersons, and media remarks by members of political consultative conferences or people's congress representatives—all groups that, due to their status as national or institutional representatives, constitute important agents of national discourse transmission. Consequently, integrating national discourse research with vocal language transmission research to identify intersection points that open innovative academic space represents an innovative scholarly practice for modernizing the national discourse system and discourse competence.

This paper proposes the issue of national discourse public expression, attempting new explorations of the connotation and functional value of national discourse vocal language transmission. The public expression attribute renders national discourse transmission with more essential characteristics.

1. National Discourse and Public Expression

Through examining various formulations of national discourse transmission, “national discourse vocal language transmission” and “national discourse oral communication” [3] have become common expressions. Following research on the connotation and extension of national discourse, this paper argues that the public expression attribute equips national discourse transmission with more fundamental features.

1.1 Proposal of the Public Expression Concept

Public expression is a compound term consisting of “public” and “expression.” Regarding the meaning of expression, Wang Luansheng, in his paper *Expression = Presenting → Reaching*, points out that “presenting” (表) forms the foundation of “reaching” (达), while “reaching” constitutes the purpose of “presenting.” The various elements of verbal expression form an organic system, with any instance of expression representing a “systematic project.” The inherent meaning of “expression” should be: the expresser (the active party in verbal communication) uses language to manifest internal thoughts, convey them to the other party, and cause the other party to accept and adopt their requirements, thereby achieving communicative purposes [4]. Wang Luansheng's interpretation of “expression = presenting → reaching” resembles the 5W communication process model proposed by American political scientist Harold Lasswell, encompassing elements including communication subject, content, channel, receiver, and effect—representing an innovative academic exploration of “expression.”

This paper defines public expression as: expressive subjects organizing expression content through multi-modal verbal forms and conducting public presentation and interaction in public spheres regarding public topics, with the aim of inducing changes in cognition, emotion, attitude, position, and action among receiving subjects to achieve public-interest-oriented vocal language communication activities.

In *Being Digital*, Nicholas Negroponte predicted that digitization would transform human existence. With the popularization of the Internet of Things, mobile internet, and intelligent AI technology, digital existence has become reality. The rise of new media platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and WeChat Video Channel signifies humanity's mediated existence—a reality where media influence knows no bounds, where everyone can obtain a microphone and engage in discourse and transmission.

From the perspective of communication subjects and content, mediated existence presents two dimensions. First, regarding the nature of communicators' identities, there are private individuals and public individuals. Private individuals represent independent personal identities expressing personal viewpoints and feelings, such as in audio podcasts and personal short videos. Public individuals express themselves as institutional representatives or media professionals, such as radio and television hosts, journalists, commentators, spokespersons, and leading cadres.

Second, regarding discourse content, there is a distinction between individual narrative and public narrative. Individual narrative primarily presents personal life details, feelings, and experiences, such as short videos and livestreams on Douyin, Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu, and WeChat Video Channel, showcasing individual daily life details and events while expressing personal insights and viewpoints. Public narrative must adhere to public norms in theme selection, discourse content, expression methods, and expression ethics. Although expressive subjects appear as individuals, they embody a layered identity chain extending from the state to institutions, professional identities, and personal attributes, exercising the function of personalized communication that combines national narrative, public narrative, and individual narrative. For example, CCTV commentators Yang Yu and host Bai Yansong possess distinctive personal styles based on their individual knowledge structures and personality traits, yet simultaneously must adhere to propaganda discipline, communication frameworks, and macro-level discourse systems and styles, representing a fusion of multi-layered identities and roles.

Comprehensively considered, public narrative by public individuals constitutes explicit public expression. Even individual narrative by private individuals becomes public expression once it enters media space using media platforms, transforming private discourse into public expression. Therefore, in the reality of mediated existence, whether willing or unwilling, active or passive, everyone enters the spatiotemporal configuration of public expression.

1.2 Conceptual Differentiation

Conceptual differentiation is not a word game but an academic exploration responding to complex and emerging communication phenomena and adapting to the reality of deeply reconstructed media ecology. The concept of public expression bears strong associative and derivative relationships with vocal language transmission and oral communication concepts, yet reveals different aspects and emphasizes different connotations of communication activities and phenomena.

This paper compares public expression, vocal language transmission, and oral communication concepts, briefly analyzing their differences. Public expression emphasizes publicness, highlighting functional values for social harmony and progressive development, accentuating the value orientation of communication for good, conducive to maintaining and enhancing social progress and public interests. Transmission represents objective, neutral description of human social exchange and interaction. Vocal language transmission emphasizes “vocal,” highlighting the medium’s characteristics, forming a category corresponding to non-vocal language such as expressions, attire, body language, images, and camera work. Oral communication emphasizes the personal and life-scenario nature of communicators, forming conceptual categories corresponding to both formal written discourse and personal expression, distinguishing it from multi-layered mass communication identities while highlighting individual freedom and personalized display.

Both vocal language transmission and oral communication use “transmission” as a suffix, with communication’s exchange and feedback constituting a closed loop of circular 增益 (gain). Public expression, however, focuses on the supply side of communication, where supply and demand sides form an interdependent relationship. Although both are indispensable, the emphasis differs. Among the various factors in communication activities, there exist synchronic hierarchical relationships of importance and diachronic sequential and link relationships. Public expression subjects constitute the first driving force of the entire communication activity chain; without this first force, the entire communication activity cannot occur spontaneously. Therefore, in studying communication activities, the first-force communication subject deserves greater attention and emphasis.

Public expression is a fusion concept, possessing core characteristics of both publicness and mass communication, while conforming to the communication reality of the new media ecology where communication subjects shift from “representative individuals” to “individual presence.” The concept of vocal language transmission accompanied the rise of radio and television media, reflecting verbal activities of communication subjects in the mass media context—transmitting media institutions’ voices, representing the state and institutions, speaking for society, and voicing public interests. Even highly personalized programs or hosts with strong individual characteristics fulfill communication functions that media institutions should perform through personalized features and individual

approaches. The oral communication concept emphasizes interpersonal communication contexts, even when interpersonal communication is brought into host programs in mass communication contexts, its primary focus concerns how interpersonal communication features and verbal realization are achieved. Particularly in verbal activity contexts on new media platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and WeChat Video Channel short videos and livestreams, the communication identity differs from that of media institution spokespersons, representing direct individual presence that highlights personal expression. Therefore, oral communication constitutes an important speech modality in the era of personal and individual communication.

Under the converged media ecology of digital existence, even discourse with extremely private or personal attributes becomes placed in public space after mediation. This represents an aspect easily overlooked in the connotation of oral communication. Examining many discourse anomie phenomena in new media contexts reveals that the implicit and non-salient public factors within the oral communication concept constitute deep-seated motivations. Public expression consciousness means constantly recognizing that personal oral discourse may be brought into public space at any time and become public speech. This paper proposes the public expression concept to reveal the reality of mediated existence in this era.

1.3 The Public Nature of National Discourse and Public Expression

National discourse inherently possesses public nature. In global governance and international diplomacy, building a community with a shared future for mankind—where each appreciates its own beauty and the beauty of others—embodies public nature. In state governance and social governance, putting people first and developing for the people embodies public nature.

National discourse public expression constitutes public expression and discourse transmission behavior by expressive subjects with national identity characteristics in public spheres, focusing on public topics and pursuing public interests as their purpose. President Xi Jinping’s annual New Year addresses, speeches at G20 summits, the initiative to jointly build the “Silk Road Economic Belt” proposed at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, statements during delegation discussions at the Two Sessions, and “Xi Jinping’s golden quotes” such as “I will be selfless and live up to the people” in diplomatic activities represent the highest form of national discourse public expression. Simultaneously, routine press releases by Foreign Ministry spokespersons in the Blue Hall, press conferences by various ministries and local governments on important policies and major events in state governance constitute regular mechanisms of national discourse public expression.

As Chinese enterprises conduct business globally, with some listing on foreign capital markets, Chinese entrepreneurs’ interviews with foreign media and speeches at industry summits and international forums also engage in national

discourse public expression in international contexts due to their enterprises' and identities' national characteristics. For instance, when Ren Zhengfei stated in a 2019 BBC interview that “the U.S. cannot kill us because Huawei’ s technology is more advanced,” or when Chinese entrepreneurs like Zhang Ruimin, Ning Gaoning, and Song Zhiping share successful Chinese enterprise management experiences and innovative management ideas at international finance or management forums, they perform national discourse public expression with entrepreneurs as expressive subjects.

The annual Caixin Summit organized by Caixin Media, particularly the 13th Caixin Summit in 2022 held simultaneously in Beijing, Shenzhen, Singapore, and Bangkok, gathered officials from domestic economic management departments, scholars, heads of central and state-owned enterprises, entrepreneurs, and financial media professionals together with foreign economists, entrepreneurs, executives, and government officials to discuss and speak on the theme “Sharing New Development Opportunities,” researching world economic trends and exploring practical issues in enterprise management and operation. The speeches by Chinese guests in this international communication context constitute national discourse public expression [5]. The *China Entrepreneur* magazine under Economic Daily annually hosts the China Enterprise Leaders Annual Conference [6], China Enterprise Future Stars Annual Conference, and China Business Mulan Annual Conference, where entrepreneurs discuss economic trends, share industry economic development conditions, and introduce enterprise management and innovation experiences, attracting domestic and international media and corporate peers’ attention—this represents the unfolding of national discourse public expression in economic and business circles.

2. Characteristics of National Discourse Public Expression

National discourse public expression, as both expressive subjects’ context-based verbal behavior and national discourse transmission activity, possesses the following characteristics.

2.1 Public Sphere

The scenarios where national discourse public expression occurs all feature public sphere characteristics. Communication subjects such as news hosts, commentators, and on-site reporters conduct transmission activities through radio, television, and new media live platforms, with mass communication media and converged new media technology reaching vast audiences while constructing public spaces and spheres that transcend spatial barriers.

National leaders’ speeches and remarks at international summits or major diplomatic occasions, with diverse participants including world political leaders and journalists constituting a physically present public space, are globally disseminated via media to reach massive audiences, constructing authentic communi-

cation spheres where both communication subjects and audiences exist despite virtual digitization. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons' routine and special press releases in the Blue Hall, government and institutional leaders' media interviews, National People's Congress deputies and CPPCC members' interviews at the "Deputies and Members Corridor" and "Ministers Corridor" during the Two Sessions, and party representatives' group interviews at the 19th and 20th Party Congresses all combine physical public spaces with external transmission spaces to serve national discourse public expression.

In the new media era where "everyone has a microphone and camera," boundaries between public and private spaces are blurring or even dissolving. When WeChat chat records between two grassroots cadres who developed an extramarital affair were exposed, triggering nationwide discussion and media condemnation; when a host's inappropriate remarks at a dinner table were recorded and widely disseminated, ultimately causing the host to leave their position—these phenomena demonstrate that in the all-media era, "private discourse" may become "public discourse," and both public and private spaces may transform into public spheres. Based on this analysis, this paper categorizes the public spheres of national discourse public expression into explicit and implicit public spheres.

Explicit Public Sphere: Manifest public physical spaces such as squares, theaters, schools, and shopping malls; finance and business forums and conferences; mass media transmission spaces like radio and television, internet spaces, and new media platforms for short videos and livestreaming.

Implicit Public Sphere: Spaces originally belonging to the private domain, such as friends' gatherings, confidants' conversations, coffee shop dates, acquaintances' or family banquets, and small salons with shared interests, may passively enter public spheres due to the convenient and covert use of mobile recording devices that publish originally private domain content on networks, voice platforms, and short video platforms, triggering mass attention and commentary. This paper terms such spaces implicit public spheres, referring to their potential for being transmitted.

2.2 Public Topics

National discourse public expression involves topics concerning national interests, social governance, economic livelihood, education and culture, disaster relief, and other major events, or social hotspots with broad impact. Although some events may occur only in specific fields or regions, directly affecting particular groups, their significance can evolve into a social psychology, forming specific public opinion, and even prompting institutional formulation or adjustment, thereby creating real impact on entire populations. These topics become subjects of national discourse public expression due to their inherent significance and social influence diffusion mechanisms affecting broader populations.

Moreover, against the backdrop of technological equity and popularized media use where mediated existence has become normalized, event mediatization ren-

ders events more influential and publicly participatory, thereby gaining entire societal attention and discussion and shaping into specific public topics. The significance of events and their extensive reach among populations constitute the foundation of their public nature. In Hannah Arendt's discussion of publicness, she noted that publicness possesses open and shared characteristics; Habermas argued that publicness requires communication, and public viewpoints and opinions need filtering through communication networks. Therefore, national discourse public expression focuses on public topics, realizing its public nature through public expression.

National discourse public expression topics can be distinguished by level into national agendas, institutional agendas, and social agendas; by type into political, economic, cultural, social, emergency, and contingency agendas. This paper elaborates from three dimensions: proactive agenda topics, changing social topics, and emergency contingency topics.

Proactive Agenda Topics: In major state governance agendas, all constitute scenarios for national discourse public expression. For example, quinquennial Party Congresses, annual Two Sessions, international conferences attended by national leaders, and routine press conferences by the Foreign Ministry are all proactively planned, regularly held, and actively agenda-setting. Additionally, celebrations such as the 70th anniversary of the PRC, the 100th anniversary of the CPC, and the Beijing Winter Olympics also represent state-proactively-set agendas. In these proactively set agendas, national leaders' reports, speeches, and remarks, as well as spokespersons' discourse and responses to journalists' questions, all revolve around public issues of state governance and domestic and foreign affairs, representing conventional scenarios of national discourse public expression.

Changing Social Topics: Social hotspots and focal events often possess contingent, random, and variable characteristics. Whether officials' media speeches or interviews addressing these hotspots or focal points, or speeches and remarks by state-owned enterprise heads and renowned entrepreneurs at forums, such public expression topics concern social stability, economic vitality, and national welfare—the foundation of national development and prosperity—and represent the unfolding of national discourse public nature at the social level.

Emergency Contingency Topics: Following major disasters or social emergencies, relevant government departments or social organizations hold press conferences or make statements through media, introducing causes, announcing emergency response measures, reporting event progress and investigation results, responding to public concerns, and organizing series of public expressions.

2.3 Public Interest

The value orientation of national discourse public expression and its goals explicitly point toward safeguarding national interests and public interests. At

international summits or major diplomatic activities, telling China's story, disseminating China's voice, and contributing to building a community with a shared future for mankind through national leaders' and diplomatic personnel's national discourse public expression participates in international discourse competition, wins discourse power belonging to China in discourse games, and thereby secures and maintains national and ethnic interests. Domestic state governance and social concern response series of national discourse public expression all highlight the pursuit of public interest as the "greatest common denominator."

According to speech act theory, "locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act collectively constitute speech acts" [7]. Whether expressive speech acts involve stating, describing, or explaining, they all aim to do things with words and achieve perlocutionary effects. Expression means presenting to reach. "Reaching" means achieving communicative effects of identification, resonance, and empathy, ultimately pointing toward the final purpose of prompting action. National discourse public expression is both "narrative behavior" and "illocutionary and perlocutionary behavior" [8], not speaking into the void, much less a "discourse show," but pursuing the enhancement and better realization of public interests.

3. Scenarios of National Discourse Public Expression

As national discourse transmission, national discourse public expression has numerous occurrence and application scenarios. Based on comprehensive analysis and classification of various discourse scenarios, these can be summarized along two dimensions.

3.1 Global Governance Dimension

National leaders and diplomatic officials' speeches, remarks, and media responses at major diplomatic occasions represent typical public expression. The effectiveness of public expression in these scenarios determines the transmission power of national propositions, constitutes an important means of competing for national discourse power, and serves as a crucial vehicle for enhancing national soft power.

In global governance, whether in pre-event planning, mid-event gaming and engagement, or post-event interpretation, all consist of series of public expression activities. The quality and efficiency of these expression activities determine whether China's solutions and wisdom can gain broad acceptance and whether China's rights and interests can be safeguarded.

The author conducted precise searches through the People's Daily Online Xi Jinping Important Speech Database, selecting time, type, and field dimensions. Search parameters were set as follows: time range 2012-2022; type: speeches

+ conferences; field: diplomacy. The search yielded 131 results, indicating 131 speeches and remarks at major international summits over the decade from 2012 to 2022, averaging approximately 13 major international summit speeches annually [9]. These cover the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Heads of State Council, Global Development High-Level Dialogue, BRICS Leaders' Meetings, BRICS Business Forum, Boao Forum for Asia, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Ministerial Conference, G20 Leaders' Summit, Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, and APEC CEO Summit, among others. In addition to regularly held international conferences, there are also thematic international conferences such as the UN General Debate and the Hague Nuclear Security Summit. These major international summits constitute important mechanisms for global governance and major power relationship coordination. At each summit, President Xi Jinping's speeches, talks, and remarks represent national discourse public expression, interpreting the connotation of China's new development pattern and proposing Chinese propositions while sending China's voice on major global affairs.

3.2 National Governance Dimension

National leaders' New Year addresses, major party congress reports, government work reports, series of important speeches, and series of instructions during inspection activities all belong to the category of national discourse public expression. Simultaneously, various government department heads' responses to journalists, press conferences, and dialogues during Two Sessions group discussions also constitute national discourse public expression. In national governance dimension public expression activities, how to improve quality and efficiency represents an important component of modernizing the national governance system and governance capabilities. Conversely, inefficient, ineffective, or negatively effective public expression by government officials and spokespersons becomes a negative factor affecting government image, increasing state governance costs.

The author conducted precise searches through the People's Daily Online Xi Jinping Important Speech Database. In setting search conditions, the field item selected sub-items including economy, politics, culture, society, ecology, party building, national defense, and diplomacy, covering domestic and international themes and all aspects of party, state, and military governance. The type item selected various national discourse application scenarios including speeches, conferences, activities, inspections, meetings, visits, correspondence, and others. The comprehensive search yielded 12,529 results.

From the national governance dimension, achieving the goal of modernizing the governance system and governance capabilities makes national discourse public expression effectiveness an important measurement indicator. Simultaneously, improving expression efficiency and enhancing expression effectiveness constitute important pathways for realizing national governance system and governance capabilities modernization.

4. Innovation Space for National Discourse Public Expression

Innovating discourse systems and enhancing discourse capabilities constitute dynamic development processes requiring continuous innovation and optimization while achieving major results.

4.1 Enhancing Discourse Cognition

Strengthening scene awareness in national discourse public expression represents a dynamic adjustment process, particularly in speeches and addresses at major international summits where expressive subjects must fully recognize public expression scene characteristics and fully consider discourse receivers' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

At major international summits, expressive scenes gather political, economic, and cultural elites from diverse cultures and national identities. National discourse public expression text creation must embody Chinese style and demonstrate Chinese discourse charm while fully considering discourse receivers' thinking habits and cultural psychology, enhancing context awareness in cross-cultural and transnational communication, striving to achieve discourse expression effects that bridge China and foreign countries.

Furthermore, national discourse public expression scenes constitute a dynamic process of expression and feedback, adjustment and revision. Based on full consideration of physical space scenes, they must comprehensively consider on-site attention mobilization, dynamic cognitive characteristics of on-site discourse receivers, and highlighting of key information. During text construction, increasing consideration of scene effects further enhances awareness of cognitive fields, activation fields, mobilization fields, control fields, and sublimation fields, incorporating dynamic field effect dimensions into text creation to fully transmit propositions, concepts, emotions, and attitudes to receiving subjects, achieving higher expression effectiveness.

4.2 Optimizing Discourse Structure

National discourse public expression discourse structure models follow principles of appropriate information volume, moderate information professionalism, and scientific distribution of information core points. National discourse public expression text creation teams comprehensively consider core information points for each instance of national discourse expression, fully recognizing receiving subjects' audio-visual information reception habits, arranging core information points at moments when audience attention is most concentrated, weakening non-core information, prominently highlighting core information, and repeatedly

reinforcing core information points through various techniques, even sublimating core information points. Following public expression reception psychological laws optimizes discourse structure models.

4.3 Transforming Discourse Style

National discourse public expression fully respects the discourse style of oral information and the fact that receiving subjects obtain information aurally, distinguishing between written text style and public expression oral transmission style, respecting different transmission-reception laws between “reading text” and “listening to discourse,” constructing reasonable and superb vocal language discourse to achieve public expression discourse effectiveness.

National discourse public expression represents expressive subjects’ implementation of public expression with national identity characteristics, focusing on public topics and public affairs, through typical physical space scenes and media spheres, to safeguard national interests and achieve social public interest enhancement. National discourse public expression constitutes a field worthy of focused attention in political communication and external communication research lineages; the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of national discourse public expression determine the performance of national strategic communication.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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