

Bridging Differences and Promoting Coordination The Narrative Strategy of External Communication in "Chinese Epidemic Chronicles"

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Abstract. The English documentary "China's War Against the Epidemic" produced by China International Television showcases China's most authentic anti epidemic journey, conveys China's anti epidemic spirit, and shapes a positive national image to the world through storytelling expression. As a successful paradigm for external communication, exploring the narrative strategy of "China's Epidemic Chronicles" has important complementary value for domestic documentaries to "go global" and accelerate the construction of Chinese discourse and narrative system.

Keywords: "Chinese War Epidemic Chronicles"; External dissemination; Narrative strategy.

1. Introduction

The Chinese Epidemic Chronicles "is an English panoramic anti epidemic documentary produced by China International Television (CGTN) after" Wuhan Epidemic Chronicles "and polished for six months. In the context of the post epidemic situation, reviewing and reflecting on the dissemination strategy of "China's War on Epidemic" from a theoretical perspective, deconstructing its creative techniques, can provide some reference for the development of documentary and external propaganda in China's sudden public health events.

2. Bridging Differences: Multiple Narratives Narrowing the Distance between Empathy

2.1 Three act narrative structure weakens cultural differences

The three-act structure, also known as the dramatic structure, is a commonly used narrative strategy for Hollywood screenwriters in feature films. Sheila Colin Bernard believes that the authenticity of a documentary is the weaving of multiple real elements into a complete story, giving it a strong appeal that far exceeds the sum of the various elements of the documentary. The Hollywood film industry's main product, the three-act narrative structure, provides a new path for documentary narrative [1]. The adoption of this technique in "Chinese Epidemic Chronicles" not only enhances the content of the film itself, but also aligns with the audio-visual thinking of Western audiences, effectively weakening cultural differences in external communication.

The first act of "Chinese War Epidemic Chronicle" begins with the story of the invasion and establishment of COVID-19. The opening scene uses live pictures and visual effects packaging to explain the harm of COVID-19 and the trend of global spread. The insertion of Chinese and English monologues creates a visual sense of blockbusters to quickly capture the audience's attention. From unknown pneumonia to uncovering the true face of COVID-19, from medical staff infection to confirming the existence of human-to-human transmission the fight against COVID-19 has gradually begun, thus determining the theme of the documentary. To prevent the spread of the virus nationwide, Wuhan was sealed off, and as a result, the anti-epidemic battle in Wuhan began in full swing. The story of the Chinese war "epidemic" centered around Wuhan officially began to be told. The second act promotes the development of the story through a confrontational narrative of the rapid spread of the virus and the nationwide fight against the epidemic. Wuhan has been completely

closed, and new contradictions have begun to emerge. From the perspective of the hospital where the protagonist Dr. Lv Qingquan is located, the continuous increase in the number of patients has led to an intensification of hospital infections, and the medical system has reached the brink of collapse. At this moment, an important turning point in the development of the story emerged, with a total of 42000 medical and nursing personnel dispatched from various provinces across the country to rush to Wuhan and build new hospitals in Huoshen Mountain and Leishen Mountain. The story of Wuhan's anti epidemic efforts continues to be told throughout the country's concerted efforts against the virus. The third act ends with the story of Wuhan lifting its lockdown and achieving a phased victory in the fight against the epidemic. After 76 days of war, the flowers bloomed in spring in Wuhan, COVID-19 patients were discharged in succession, and the medical teams in Hubei returned in batches. The scene once again returns to the place where the story takes place - Dr. Lv Qingquan's office, where he has lived for exactly a hundred days. At the end of the documentary, a large number of monologues are once again cited to highlight the theme.

2.2 Causal linear narrative determines logical thinking

Causal linear structure narrative is a classic narrative technique in film narratology, which has two main characteristics: firstly, the film unfolds along time clues and generally does not set a second main thread to interrupt its progress; Secondly, within the framework of time clues, the story is driven by the causal connection of events to move forward. Sheila Colin Bernard believes that documentaries are images that narrate in chronological order [2]. Documentary films are different from drama films in that they use real stories as the material to reflect the theme. Real events in real society often contain various complex factors, and the use of causal linear structures can clarify ideas, connect multiple events, and increase drama and film attention.

The causal linear narrative structure and Hollywood three act narrative can sometimes be applied simultaneously in the same documentary, and there is no conflict between them. The main storyline of "Chinese Epidemic Chronicles" is based on Dr. Lv Qingquan and is driven forward within the framework of Hollywood's three act narrative. In order to ensure a clearer narrative logic of the event, the producer has added the main thread of development time. In addition, the experience of Dr. Lv Qingquan is interspersed with stories of ordinary people from various industries. These branch stories have independent emotional peaks and valleys, and many small stories are interconnected to form a whole by working together to fight the epidemic, driving the story forward.

2.3 Balanced structural narrative presenting diverse perspectives

The number of speeches and interviews cited in the "Chinese Epidemic Chronicles" exceeded 60 people, mainly divided into government officials, frontline medical staff, other frontline anti epidemic personnel, citizens, and patients, with an even proportion of the interviewed population. In the documentary, there are not only the interpretation of the COVID-19 policy by the central officials, but also the research and judgment of the high-level medical expert group on the current situation; There are not only medical and nursing perspectives to face the difficulties and persistence of COVID-19's treatment, but also ordinary people to express their real anxiety and gratitude. The film ensures that every group has the right to express their opinions, presenting diversity and multiple perspectives. The overall balance between official discourse and folk discourse has been ensured, changing the narrative techniques used in such documentaries to praise virtues, allowing people from different industries and social classes to have the right to express themselves, allowing different opinions to exist, and caring for the vocal vulnerable groups.

To reveal the contradictions of the epidemic, "China's Epidemic Chronicles" uses a "catalyst" approach to conduct in-depth interviews with medical staff and patients on the front line, showcasing their most authentic side, presenting two discourse systems of identification and confrontation internally, enhancing narrative authenticity. Faced with the severe epidemic situation in the city, Wuhan carried out a three-day community investigation, implemented the strictest

community epidemic prevention policies, and blocked community transmission. The introduction of this policy has posed great challenges to grassroots community workers, and the lack of understanding among the masses has erupted. The documentary truly exposed this issue, fully showcasing different viewpoints during the epidemic prevention process, providing space for different opinions to be expressed, and allowing foreign audiences to see the pros and cons of the epidemic prevention process. The expression strategy of "dual cues" makes the dissemination of content more persuasive.

3. Promoting Coordination: A Multidimensional Observation of Narrative Time and Space

3.1 Visual symbol rendering of spatiotemporal atmosphere

Compared to text, images are more visual and have unique advantages in cross-cultural communication. The Chinese Epidemic Chronicles uses parallel montage techniques to advance several narrative lines in parallel, serving the same theme together. In the film, the scenes of medical teams and supplies rushing towards Hubei, over 4000 military medical staff flying to Wuhan, and donations of anti-epidemic materials from various countries are combined, depicting the gathering of various forces in Hubei, presenting a scene of one side facing difficulties and support from all directions. This parallel montage style of expression makes the transition between time and space flexible and variable, presenting diverse characteristics in the film. At the same time, the superimposed storyline also pushes the theme to a climax.

Data visualization expression is another highlight of the camera language of China War Epidemic Chronicle. Documentaries on the theme of COVID-19 epidemic are different from historical and humanistic documentaries, which contain a large amount of scientific knowledge and real-time changing data. It is difficult for the audience to understand if only relying on text description. China War Epidemic Annals uses icons and animations to realize data visualization, which vividly and intuitively shows the virus principle and data changes. For example, when talking about the performance of COVID-19, use animation special effects to simulate the principle of virus invasion. In addition, at multiple critical time nodes, dynamic coordinate systems are used to deduce changes in the number of confirmed cases, to demonstrate the role of policies and actions.

Color is one of the important elements of an image, which plays a role in conveying ideas and rendering the atmosphere. The overall presentation of "Chinese Epidemic Chronicles" is in a cool tone, which is in line with the existing visual habits of Western audiences and belongs to an impartial, truthful, and fair emotional transmission of the images. In the first half of the film, when portraying scenes such as empty city shots and rescue wards, the tone is dim, conveying suppressed emotions and metaphorically symbolizing the virus enveloping the entire city. As the event progressed, the number of patients in Wuhan gradually decreased, and the overall color of the film began to transition from cold tones to warm tones. From the coldness of the virus to the warmth of human nature, it symbolizes that the cold winter has passed and Wuhan is once again welcoming the warmth of spring and blooming flowers. At the end of the film, the national mourning for the Chinese people who passed away in the epidemic was recorded, and the color of the screen turned to gray to express a solemn and solemn emotion.

3.2 Auditory symbols expand the interior space of the painting

Simultaneous sound refers to the original sound preserved at the filming site of a film, and the simultaneous sound of a documentary mainly includes character interviews, environmental sound, etc. The "Chinese Epidemic Chronicles" cites a large number of interviews with characters of different identities to express opinions, explain the current situation, and promote the development of the plot. Compared to commentary, using character interviews (especially the views of authoritative figures) can more convince the audience and increase the persuasiveness of the

narrative system. The film is led by a dialogue between the host and Dr. Lv Qingquan, and repeatedly quotes speeches from World Health officials and medical experts such as Tan Desai, Zhong Nanshan, and Zeng Guang to support their views. The film also retains a large number of live soundtracks, such as those of intensive care unit rescue and hospital overcrowding, expressing a tense and severe anti epidemic atmosphere, while also realistically reproducing the actual scene.

Commentary is one of the commonly used narrative techniques in documentaries, which has the function of expanding the interior space and guiding the development of the story. The "Chinese Epidemic Chronicles" is explained in pure English and emphasizes a straightforward expression, avoiding decoding issues in high and low contexts in cross-cultural communication. The film emphasizes the transformation of expression methods, which is easy for Western audiences to understand. For example, to highlight the enormous impact of the closure of Wuhan, when describing Wuhan city, it is described as "a city with a population three times that of Los Angeles", which helps Western audiences understand its concept of scale more vividly. In addition, the film also focuses on the combination of first person and third person discourse expression. The third person transforms the eastern discourse into the western discourse from the perspective of onlookers to fit the understanding and thinking of the western audience. Many narrations are quoted from the narration of the characters, and the first-person presence perspective is used to increase the narrative sense and storytelling of the documentary and fill the audience's understanding gap.

Both music and sound effects can play an externalizing role in rendering emotions, increasing the dramatic content, and activating the overall narrative framework. The narration of the opening characters in the film "Chinese Epidemic Chronicles" mixed with tense background sounds, heartbeat sounds, sirens, and other sounds, heralded a magnificent and magnificent anti epidemic epic. The sound of thunder and rain rendered the scene of sadness and oppression, while Dr. Lv Qingquan's appearance was accompanied by soothing and powerful background music, symbolizing the light of hope. Afterwards, the overcrowding, crying, pleading, doctor monologues, and urgent background sounds in the ward mixed, pushing the conflict to a climax. At the end of the film, Dr. Lv Qingquan returns home, and an English song "Safe and Sound" expresses the desire for the epidemic to dissipate and the shared emotions between China and foreign countries.

References

- [1] Sheila Colin Bernard, "Documentary Tells Stories" [M], World Book Publishing Company, 2011 edition, pp. 71-78.
- [2] Sheila Colin Bernard, "Documentary Tells Stories" [M], World Book Publishing Company, 2011 edition, pp. 71-78.