Who Tells Chinese Country Stories Well:
Analysis of the “Narrative Voice” of the Agricultural Broadcast Program “Nostalgia”

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Telling stories of China well and rural revitalization strategies are both important words in current Chinese national policies. As an important position for agricultural propaganda, broadcast media should play the social function of media to help the new pattern of rural development where man and nature coexist harmoniously construct. This paper mainly focuses on the “Voice of China Countryside” social education & service program “Nostalgia” (《乡土乡情》) as the research object, based on the theory of narratology, analyzes the narrative voice of “Nostalgia”, thinks about how to tell Chinese country stories well by the agricultural social education & service broadcast program in the new era, and passes the voice of the Chinese countryside in the new era.

Keywords: agricultural broadcast, “Nostalgia”, narrative voice, narrator

Introduction

China is a big agricultural country. President Xi Jinping emphasized that “China must be strong and agriculture must be strong; China must be beautiful, but rural areas must be beautiful; if China is to be rich, farmers must be rich.” The resolution of “agriculture, countryside and farmer issues” is of great importance. The column of “Nostalgia” relies on the “Voice of China Countryside” of the state-level media-China Media Group (China National Radio) to communicate. This is a social education & service program aimed at serving the rural areas and enriching the lives of farmers with the theme of rural tourism, food, and culture. “Nostalgia” is a radio program, which is different from the comprehensive use of picture, sound, montage and other expressive methods in TV programs to enrich the audio-visual effects and the audience’s aesthetic experience. Radio programs can only spread information through the single medium of “sound”, thus moving the audience’s auditory experience. Behind the “sound” is the “sender” of the sound. In the radio program “Nostalgia”, the speakers are the host, interviewer, interviewee, etc. The narrative theory refers to the “sender” of such sounds defined as “narrator”. The “narrative voice” and the “narrator” are inseparable. The “narrative voice” comes from the “narrator”, and the “narrator” determines the “narrative voice”, the problem arising from this is the type and function of the
narrator. From the viewpoint of “narrative voice” in narratology theory, the research selected 140 program samples from July 2018 to January 2019 to analyze how the radio program “Nostalgia” tells rural stories well.

The Narrative Voice and Narrators of “Nostalgia”

In the radio program “Nostalgia”, the sounds we hear include linguistic program titles, clips, public welfare timekeeping, and different sections of the program content, as well as various non-verbal music, sound, etc., all of which are “Narrative voices”, these voices come from the host, narration and dubbing, interview reporters, interviewed people’s words, and various sound effects such as music and live sound from various programs, all of which are the “narrators” behind the “narrative voices”. In the narrative theory, the narrator is the originator of the narrative voice, that is, the source of the sound in the narrative work, which will determine the narrative voice of the work. Therefore, the narrator is the teller of the narrative work, and is the “voice” embodied in the work. In any narrative work, there is at least one narrator. The narrator belongs to “‘the actor who expresses the linguistic signs that constitute the text’ or an equivalent actor in other media” (Bal, 2003, p. 19).

In the column of “Nostalgia”, as the controller of the overall program-the host in the studio is the narrator who presents the work, representing who created the sound of the program to the audience. For example, on December 16, 2018, the program with the theme of ancient villages started:

There is a rural culture, and a local accent conveys the nostalgia. Hello, listeners and friends...In the ancient village, there are splendid fields, ancient houses and old temples, as well as endless ancient stories. Today’s program will take you to a few characteristic villages and towns. Go shopping and experience a different kind of homesickness...What are the characteristics of the beautiful countryside in your hometown? Is it ecological beauty, rich products, profound history and culture, or is it good for rural tourism and farmhouse?

In each episode of the program, the interviewer and interviewee are the narrators of different short stories, conveying the narrative voice of each part.

In narrative works, we can hear the narrative voice of the narrator, and through this narrative voice, we can see the characters, time, place, environment, etc. that the work expresses. The narrators, the studio host, the narrator, the interviewer, and the interviewee, delivered the narrative voice and the style of the program to be displayed in “Nostalgia”.

Categories of the Narrators of “Nostalgia”

The “narrative voices” in the program “Nostalgia” come from the “narrators”, and the classification criteria for distinguishing narrators are also different. “According to the degree to which the narrator can be perceived, it can be divided into two types: explicit narrators and implicit narrators, or public narrators and hidden narrators” (Tan, 2011, p. 62). American scholar Chatman first proposed the concept in his book “Story and Discourse” in 1978. From Chatman’s point of view, the explicit narrator can be a real character, while the implicit narrator will appear in the so-called hidden character narration. That is to say, the difference between an explicit narrator and an implicit narrator lies in whether the narrator appears in the narrative work, and the degree of exposure is different, which can have the greatest degree of exposure and the greatest degree of concealment. Explicit narrators appear in narrative works. They communicate and speak directly or indirectly with the recipient of the
narration. They have a discourse tendency toward the plot and characters in the story, while implicit narrators are just the opposite. They are generally not revealing traces in narrative works.

According to the distinction between explicit narrators and implicit narrators, there are several types of narrators in the radio program “Nostalgia”. One type is the explicit narrators consist of studio host, the recording report, the recording or the live broadcast connection reporters and interviewees, they mainly narrate in the form of voiced language, and the audience can clearly feel their existence; one type of implicit narrators based on music and sound are mainly non-verbal forms to make a narrative.

The first category, explicit narrators, studio hosts. As the leader and serializer of the program process, while the personal broadcasting style is formed, it also shapes the overall style of the “Nostalgia” column. In the narrative process, every sentence of the host has a referent and has a certain function. There are certain requirements for the language skills of audio language creators. The importance of the language skills of social education service programs is reflected in the ecological concept that penetrates the program recording site, pays attention to the dialectics of learning and use; flexible use of language expression skills; common sense of interpersonal communication, exerting the effect of “self-man”, and learning “self-acquaintance”; discourse rhetoric under association and abnormal thinking can highlight the entertaining nature; possess the ability of retelling. For example, the introduction at the beginning of each program should be innovative and lead the audience into the program. In addition, in the column of “Nostalgia”, the host will further process and modify the more colloquial text in the manuscript that has been edited into a more concise and understandable spoken language, and connect the parts at the beginning and end of the program and each part.

Explicit narrator are reporters and interviewees. The diversity of interviewed reporters and interviewees in the program “Nostalgia” promotes the formation of a multidimensional narrative. In order to achieve better communication effects, a successful recording interview report or special program often requires reporters to interview multiple characters, presenting the complete picture of the event from different perspectives and levels, and showing the characters’ psychological characteristics. The recording or live broadcast planning and reporting of each program of “Nostalgia”, the reporter will interview the protagonist of the story and the surrounding characters during the program. Through the interview of the characters from different angles and the excavation of information, not only can the audience have a real experience of the reporter’s scene, it can also convey the values of the interviewees to a certain extent, sublimate the theme of this issue, and make the content of the program more abundant. For example, the program on October 23, 2018 went to Anshun, Guizhou, and introduced the demonstration villages for rural revitalization. The village secretary gave the most appropriate information about the obvious changes in the village. The reporter and the village secretary talked about the means to promote rural changes, and this paragraph theme of the report, “Rural Revitalization”. In this report, the communication between the reporter and the interviewee was directly related to the theme of “Rural Revitalization”. The plain and ordinary words made people moving. Persistence in serving the countryside is the positive energy spirit that the program should promote.

The second category, implicit narrator, music. The music of the column “Nostalgia” mainly includes the opening music of the program, the interval music of the host’s language paragraph, the background music in the program and the song insertion. Appropriate music can not only give the program a sense of rhythm, but also set off the atmosphere and infect emotions, so as to achieve the ideal listening effect. In the production process of the
“Nostalgia” program, the background soundtrack is mostly brisk and pleasant, which is in line with the characteristics of the broadcast audience. It can jump easily without being too heavy and the song insertion is not fixed, mainly to match the narrative theme.

For example, in food-themed programs, the selection of background music from the “Bite of the Tongue” series in the process of food production has a strong sense of substitution. When introducing ethnic regions, the introduction of folk songs and opera culture and music insertion enriched the indirect feelings of this region. The song insertion is not fixed, mainly to match the narrative theme. For example, introducing the program on December 31, 2018 to introduce Changsha, Hunan, and inserting the song “Liuyang River” and the opera “Liu Hai Chopping Woods” in a timely manner based on the narrative content. On January 1, 2019, the program introduced the inserted song “Honghu Water Waves”, “Dragon Boat Tune” and so on.

Implicit narrator, sound. The sound that appears in the broadcasting of broadcast programs can be divided into live sound and sound effects. “For live audio, the objective existence of sound is the source of its sense of reality. Live audio can be used to create a scene and atmosphere, and express the character and emotions of the characters. The audience can imagine the scenes in the scene based on the sound they hear. The image includes the sound of natural environment such as the sound of opening doors and the sound of rain, the sound of sighs and screams of characters, and the sound of machines and tools” (Han, 2011, pp. 137-138). Since most of the protagonists in the column “Nostalgia” live in towns and rural areas, the interviewed environment is often a vast agricultural environment.

For example, on January 3, 2019, the sound when the door was opened in the series report “Countryside Blossoms and Beautiful Mountains: Rivers-Porcelain Rhyme” (《乡野繁花秀山河——瓷韵光华》), The sound of the sliding door in this report shows a link in the production of porcelain, burning porcelain, and also shows the craftsman’s spirit of craftsmanship. Through the use of beautiful audio language, especially the use of music and sound, the form of expression is vivid and lively, and it is entertaining, so that the audience can be taught and enlightened in the subtle way.

The above several kinds of narrators appear alternately in the program of “Nostalgia”, and the explicit narrator is the dominant and the implicit narrator appears appropriately, which makes the program more enjoyable and facilitates the audience to accurately obtain needed and interesting information from the narrating of different narrators.

The Functions of the Narrators of “Nostalgia”

It is precisely because different types of narrators play a variety of roles in the program that can achieve the expected effect of each program and highlight the theme of this program. In narrative works, the functions of the narrators are multifaceted. Genette has a relatively complete discussion on this, which can be used as a reference. (Genette, 1980, pp. 255-259). There are roughly five categories as follows.

Firstly, the narrative function of the narrators. “As the subject of narration, the primary function of the narrators is to narrate. Only the narrative can become a narrator, and only the narrative of the narrator can have the existence of the narrative text” (Tan, 2011, p. 71). The significance of the narrative in the narrative text has been explained before, so I won’t repeat it here.
Secondly, the communication function of the narrators. In narrative works, the narrator is the core of communication, and the communication is multifaceted, not only for the implicit audience, but also for the narrated person and the character. The purpose of this kind of communication is not only to make the narrated person listen to its narrative and the implicit audience to accept its narrative, but also to make the task activities in the story have a reasonable basis. In addition, through this kind of communication, the narrator’s narrative will reflect the value norms he wants to convey. For example, on July 26, 2018, “Nostalgia” introduced the textile craftsmanship of Buyi People in Guizhou, and the exchanges between reporters and interviewees. The dialogue here is very simple and the sentence structure is not complicated, but it shows the lively and lively atmosphere of the story scene and reflects the respect for the national culture and the promotion of traditional handicrafts in this episode.

Thirdly, the verification function of the narrators. “The narrator of any article or a narrative work always hopes that the potential readers he faces will believe in everything he narrates. Therefore, the narrator always uses various methods to prove that what he is telling is true. It must happen rather than fabricated at will” (Tan, 2011, p. 71). The beginning of each episode of “Nostalgia” or the beginning of the recording report will be supported by language. For example, on December 21, 2018, we introduced radish, a common ingredient in winter. The host started the program, as the narrator, the host not only introduced the theme of today’s show, but also emphasized the necessity and importance of promoting this to the audience.

Fourthly, the persuasive function of the narrator. In order for the implicit audience to accept its narrative, the narrator must use various methods, such as logical inferences, emotional appeals, reasonable descriptions of objective conditions such as the environment, and slightly moving narratives to persuade and move people. For example, in the final special report section of the program of “Nostalgia” on December 25, 2018, “Countryside Flowers Show Mountains and Rivers-Hanmo Family Style” (《乡野繁花秀山河——翰墨家风》), the narrator pointed out an important place for the activities of the characters in the story at the beginning. This is the village. In order to convince people that the scene in front of them is reasonable and reasonable, the narrator uses metaphors and rhetorical techniques, here, the narrator uses the lyrical description of “country and wild flower” as a farmer who inherits folk art to move people’s hearts, and uses rhetorical words “family poverty to learn calligraphy? What does calligraphy bring?” to persuade the audience to “Hanmo” It can bring a good family style, and make people believe it imperceptibly. This is due to the persuasive function of the narrator.

Fifthly, the function of narrator intervention. “The intervention of the narrator is widespread in the work. It is an important means for the narrator to influence the narrative text. The intervention of the narrator is generally carried out by the narrator commenting on the characters, events and even the work itself. This intervention goes beyond The definition of the actors and the environment in the text and the description of events” (Tan, 2011, p. 72). That is to say, in such narrative works, the narrator is not only focused on expressing behavior, but not only narrating the words and actions of the characters. Due to its important role in narrative works, related academic works have a separate chapter “Narrator Intervention”. Chatman divides the intervention into two types: intervention in the story and intervention in discourse. In the program of “Nostalgia”, the narrator host is a common interventionist, commenting on events or characters, and the intervention of the narrator has obvious value judgment and evaluation significance. For the narrator’s “comment”, Prince concluded: “In the comment, the narrator explains the meaning of the narrative element and makes value judgments. It involves areas beyond
the scope of the character’s activities and comments on his or her own narrative. It can be purely decorative; it can achieve rhetorical purposes; it can also function as a basic part of the dramatic structure of a narrative text” (Prince, 2003, p. 14). For example, on August 20, 2018, the Guizhou Pepper Festival live report, when it comes to the evaluation of this place in Guizhou, the narrator first affirmed the beauty of this land in Guizhou with exquisite language, and then a few beautiful parallel sentences “here…here…” make the audience more impressed by this “magic” land, through the intervention of narration, control the audience’s emotions, and explain the narrative content at the same time, express more emotions and be easy for the audience to accept.

**Conclusion**

“Nostalgia” is the epitome of many different types of Chinese rural radio and television programs. They are always telling stories of Chinawell and helping rural revitalization. Play an important role in other aspects. The issues of agriculture, countryside, and farmer are related to the harmonious and stable development of China’s society. The guidance, practicality, and service role of China’s agricultural broadcasting led by the “Voice of China Countryside” is worthy of our continuous research and discussion. In the era of smart media, China Agricultural Broadcasting is still worthy of our attention to its growth, and we look forward to its future development and progress.

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