Analysis of Alienation of College Students' Network Communication from the Perspective of Communicative Behavior Theory

Han-qi LI¹,a

¹Institute of Higher Education, China University of Geo Sciences (Wuhan), Wuhan, Hubei, China
²289628537@qq.com

Keywords: Habermas, Communicative Behavior Theory, College Students, Network Communication Alienation.

Abstract. According to Habermas' theory of communicative behavior, communicative behavior is the most reasonable social behavior. It takes language as the medium, takes the life world as the background, and pays attention to the intersubjectivity between actors. At present, there are some alienation phenomena of network communication among college students, such as addiction to Internet communication, crisis of trust, difficulties in real communication and decline of ethics and morality. The theory of communication behavior has certain enlightening significance for solving the alienation of college students' network communication, including strengthening the cultivation of the inter subjectivity awareness of College Students' network communication, improving the network communication qualification of college students, and standardizing the network communication environment of college students.

Alienation refers to the things that originally belong to human beings or the result of human activities gain the independence and in turn become the power of restricting and ruling people. Communication is the basic existence mode of people in society, which is a kind of equal and free direct communication, established with language as the medium, between people. When the relationship between people changes from "subject-subject" to "subject-object", communication begins to dissimilate. In the era of network information, the network communication, with the Internet as the intermediary and text information as the symbol, can change the constraints of the identity background of the communication subject and cross the obstacles of time and space, so as to expand the scope of communication. However, due to the college student's irrational cognition of the network and characteristics of the network communication, such as the virtual and hidden, the network communication will have a negative impact on their "online" and "offline" communication, resulting in the alienation of network communication. The theory of communicative behavior has made great achievements in criticizing the alienation of communication brought about by instrumental rationality, realizing the rationalization of communication, and standardizing the social public order. It is of great significance to solve the problem of network communication alienation of contemporary college students.

1. The Core Point of Communicative Behavior Theory

The Early Frankfurt School profoundly explained that science and technology not only improved people's ability to transform the world, but also caused the overflow of instrumental rationality. People pursued material interests and rights crazily, which leaded to the invasion of the life world by money and bureaucracy, and the alienation communication between people started. But
Habermas, as the main representative of the second generation of Frankfurt School, opposed the Early Frankfurt School’s addiction of criticizing instrumental rationality and rigidly criticized capitalist social culture and ideology. He sublated the critical theory of the Early Frankfurt School, “shifted from the “philosophy of consciousness”, which focused on the relationship between subject and object and advocated subjectivity to the “philosophy of language”, which focused on the relationship between language and the world and advocated inter subjectivity…”[2] and advocated that social rationalization could be realized by criticizing instrumental rationality and reconstructing communicative rationality.

1.1. Communicative Behavior is the Most Reasonable Social Behavior

Habermas divides people's behavior in real life into four categories: instrumental behavior, normative behavior, dramatic behavior, and communicative behavior (see the table below). Instrumental behavior, also known as goal behavior, refers to the behavior that the actor realizes some communicative purpose by using effective means or ways, and relates to the objective world. Normative behavior refers to that actors, as members of social groups, abide by some common value orientation and social norms, and adjust their own behaviors according to the requirements of such norms, so as to relate the social world and the objective world. Drama behavior is the actor's self-performance, which consciously expresses his subjective feelings, views, and attitudes to other actors (audience), and relates the subjective world and the objective world (including social objects). Communicative behavior is the most reasonable social behavior. It is a comprehensive communication behavior between at least two actors with speech and behavior ability. “In the process of communication, in order to enter a common context, the speaker and the audiences start from their life world at the same time, connect with the objective world, social world and subjective world”.[3]

| Behavior pattern   | Ontological premise | Effectiveness requirements | The role of language | Irrationality                                      |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Instrumental behavior | objective world | Authenticity                  | Media for communication purpose | Utilitarianism leads to the lack of actor's morality |
| Normative behavior | Social world, objective world | Legitimacy                    | The cultural value of media | There is no reflection on the objective world |
| Dramatic behavior | Subjective world, objective world | Sincerity                      | Heritage              | The actor expresses his feelings unilaterally |
| Communicative behavior | objective world, Subjective world, Social world | Comprehensibility, Authenticity, Legitimacy, Sincerity | Media to achieve comprehensive communication | reasonable |

Table 1. Comparison of four sociological behaviors.
1.2. Language is the Medium of Communication

In the theory of communicative behavior, Habermas no longer emphasizes the ego of the behavior agents, but pays attention to the intersubjectivity between the behavior agents. Intersubjectivity is a kind of mutual understanding, respect, and equality between subjects, which is based on self-identity, rather than a single dependency relationship between subject and object. In his opinion, this common relationship is established based on language. Language is the medium of communication. The equal and mutual understanding between behavior agents should be realized through rational language. In Habermas' universal pragmatics, language, as the medium of comprehensive communication, must meet the following four requirements: "comprehensible, authentic, sincere and correct." Finally, the communicative behavior agents must have certain communicative qualifications and can promote the rationalization of communication with the help of language, that is, the ability to understand the communicative language conforming to certain social norms and the ability to apply the sentence with complete structure to communication practice.

1.3. Life World is the Background of Communication

Habermas creatively absorbed Husserl's "life world" and thought that the life world includes three parts: cultural reproduction, social integration, and individual socialization. The three parts can be understood from two aspects: first, from the perspective of individuals, the life world, the "background Presupposition" of the communicative subject's communication behavior and the premise of setting his own identity is unified in the objective world, social world, and subjective world. Habermas once stressed that "communicative behavior is rooted in the world of life. Communicative actors cannot be separated from this world and always move in their life world." Secondly, from the perspective of quasi society, Habermas's pre-set life world "has the function of mutual understanding background construction and belief storage," which can adjust the order of social communication and maintain social stability. In other words, the life world is the social practice and cultural knowledge shared by the communication subjects within a certain range of communication, and it also is the pre-setting background for the communication subjects to understand each other. Under this concept, the life world reflects the continuity of cultural heritage and the stability and unity of social group identity.

2. The Basic Performance of College Students' Network Communication Alienation

With the rapid development of Internet technology, the network, "initially has the characteristics of 'openness, interaction and sharing', has been endowed with 'instantaneity' and 'intelligence' with the development of mobile intelligent terminals," which has more profound impact on people's behavior and communication mode. According to the statistics of China Internet Network Information Center, as of December 2017, the number of Internet users in China has reached 772 million, of which the student group, the largest netizen group, accounts for 25.4%. Network communication has occupied an indispensable position in the way of College Students' communication. To a certain extent, the network overcomes the shortcomings of the traditional forms of communication and enables the actors to communicate in a relatively free, open, and convenient environment. However, the "double-edged sword" nature of the network often impacts a variety of negative effects on the behavior subject, among which the alienation of network communication or the objectification of the subject is the most prominent problem.
2.1. Internet Addiction

The current college students, labeled as the "network aborigines", are a generation growing up with the development of information network. The Internet is as indispensable to them as their organs. Due to the lack of rational cognition of the network, young college students tend to rely on or even indulge in the network world in the process of network communication, thus losing their dominant position and being controlled by the network. This mainly manifested in: first, escape from interpersonal communication. There are many behavioral norms and ethical requirements in traditional social communication activities. For "network aborigines", they prefer virtual communication to avoid the "red tape" which makes them feel anxious. Second, indulge in network virtual communication. Network communication has the characteristics of freedom, convenience, openness, and diversity. It has a strong attraction to young college students and makes them, with weak self-control ability, immersed in it. Third, network anomie is easy to occur. In the network virtual world, college students' self-restraint will become weak, resulting in the occurrence of some bullying behaviors such as intimidation and humiliation, language violence, human flesh search and so on.

2.2. Real Trust Crisis

The society that Habermas envisioned is a kind of “communication rationalization” society. Under the real social background, there is no coercion and oppression between the communication subjects. Through sincere and equal communication dialogues, cooperation will be achieved based on mutual recognition. The network is a virtual space which advocates individuality. The long-term communication activities mediated by the network will cause the expansion of College Students' subjective consciousness. It is easy to transform the equal and sincere "subject-subject" communication between people into the "subject-object" unequal communication, by taking themselves as the center. At the same time, due to the lack of effective and comprehensive network supervision, the information obtained by college students in network communication is often anonymous and virtual. If the communicative subject lacks real and effective social background information, then the requirements of language effectiveness cannot be met, and it will be difficult to generate mutual and full trust. In the long run, the indirect communication on the Internet will cause a sense of alienation between people, which makes the subjects of communication habitually doubt each other and produce trust crisis.

2.3. Real Communication Difficulties

The life world is the background presupposition of the subject's communication activities, and it also is the precondition for the objective world, social world, and subjective world to become possible. Therefore, the reasonable communication behaviors of the communication subjects need to be based on the real social life background and rely on the social reality. The vast amount of information available on the Internet greatly facilitates college students to expand their horizons and acquire knowledge. However, the unlimited extension of the network also easily leads to difficulties in the real communication of college students. Firstly, college students need to invest more time, energy, and emotion into their real communication with others, while the convenience of network communication makes their emotional communication with the real world less and less. What's more, they will be unwilling and unable to carry out effective real interpersonal communication. Secondly, college students can play different roles and constantly switch the roles between the virtual and the real according to their communicative purposes in the virtual network.
communication, which is very easy to confuse the differences between the real communication and the network communication, bring the virtual role in the network into the real life and destroying the balance between the real communication and the network communication. Third, as the network continues to be intelligent, college students can solve the problems of shopping, payment, entertainment and learning through mobile APP without leaving home. This not only brings convenience to college students' life, but also weakens their real communication ability and life practice ability, which will hinder their socialization process finally.

2.4. Ethical Decline

Habermas believes that in a certain social group, it is necessary to establish a set of norms and standards that represent the wishes of most people. In the process of communication, communication subjects should respect and abide by these recognized norms and standards and they should constantly adjust their behaviors according to these norms. In the network world, the situations in which “ideas and value orientations are becoming more and more active, the mainstream and non-mainstream coexist and the social ideological trends are diverse” are more prominent. The phenomena that good and bad network information are intermingled, pluralistic network values coexist and elegance and vulgarity survive together are common in the network world. Due to the facts that young college students are still in the stage of life in which the outlook on life, values and world outlook are gradually formed, the value judgments are not mature enough, the internalization degree of social ethics and network ethics is relatively low and there is still a certain gap in legal consciousness, especially in network legal awareness, they will be exposed to negative, vulgar and wrong information for a long time, which will easily lead to their confusion of values, anomie of behavior, weakening of social responsibility and behaviors, such as Internet pornography, privacy invasion, network fraud and others, which touch the bottom line of ethics and even cross the red line of law, if not properly guided and standardized.

3. The Enlightenment of Communicative Behavior Theory to the Alienation of College Students' Network Communication

The theory of communicative behavior is not a perfect theory, there are many theoretical defects in it. For example, under the current development conditions of human society, the fact that there is inequality between people makes Habermas' ideal discourse environment rather Utopian. Also, Habermas regards rationality as the decisive force of social development, which falls into the quagmire of historical idealism. Nevertheless, the theory of communication behavior can help college students return to healthy network communication and build a positive and harmonious network communication environment.

3.1. Cultivating the Network Communication Intersubjectivity Consciousness of College Students

Replacing the traditional "subjectivity" with "inter subjectivity" is the basis for eliminating the expansion of instrumental rationality, brought about by the development of science and technology, and reconstructing the communicative rationality. Instead of just highlighting the existence of subjectivity, the emotion and consciousness of both sides, independent and equal individuals, of communication subjects should be valued and respected by each other. Habermas points out that intersubjectivity is based on language. Therefore, it is necessary to choose proper and standard communicative language as the medium in the cultivation of intersubjectivity. The intersubjectivity
in network communication is embodied in the intersubjectivity of network, that is, college students can realize that both sides of communication are equal and independent individuals, so they should respect and understand each other. For one thing, it is necessary for college students to have a correct understanding of the “subject-object” relationships between themselves and the network, a medium of communication; for another thing, they should realize the equal relationships between themselves and other communication subjects. They are supposed to avoid substituting the subject object relationship with things into the equal relationship with people, and put "subjective self" above other communicative subjects.

3.2. Improve the Network Communication Qualifications of College Students

The communication subjects with certain communication qualifications are the premise of communication rationalization. Habermas believes that communicative competence is the ability to use the language, with the goal of mutual understanding, to apply the sentences with complete structure to reality and make the two matches. [9] The extend of understanding the objective things and the relationships between the subjects plays a very important role in the rationalization of communication behavior. Only when the actors have certain self-cognition ability and rational discrimination ability, can the alienation phenomena be effectively avoided.

In the network communication, the communication qualifications of college students are embodied in three kinds of abilities: the first one is the ability of rational cognition. College students should have a clear understanding of the nature of the network, dialectically treat the change of communication mode brought about by the development of science and technology, rationally distinguish the real world from the Internet world, achieving the unity of instrumental rationality and communicative rationality in the end. Secondly, the ability of understanding and discrimination. Network language is expanding the boundary of traditional language, seen by the fact that many network words and expressions are constantly emerging. These words are either newly created or endowed with new connotations, even some network words are contrary to the social orders and good customs. If they can't understand and use these network languages correctly, it is difficult to achieve the ideal network communication state. Thirdly, organization and expression ability. College students should be able to take appropriate ways to organize the network language, in order to promote the effective and comprehensive communication between the two sides and realize the rationalization of communication.

3.3. Purify the Network Communication Environment for College Students

The core of realizing the rationalization of communication is to realize the communication and dialogue between the two sides without compulsion. “In order to ensure that the topics and opinions of the actors are not limited, we should let the more convincing arguments be free from any coercion and seek the truth together. At the same time, any other motivation should be abandoned.”[10] As far as the current level of social development is concerned, it is difficult for us to create an ideal discourse environment for pure spiritual and emotional communication, which is free from the shackles of material interests. However, we can establish a certain range of norms recognized by the main body of communication, regulate the network communication behavior of the subject, maintain the network and real social order, and protect the rights and interests of more actors. [11] Cyberspace is the common spiritual home of hundreds of millions of people. General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed the need to constantly purify the haze of the network and maintain the good order of the Internet, so as to create a clear network of air for all netizens.[12]
To purify the network communication environment of college students, first of all, we should constantly improve the network technology. As for the virtual nature of the network, the real name communication mode will be implemented to increase the transparency of network communication; secondly, we should strengthen the legal supervision, standardize the network dissemination information, establish a qualified information filtering system, improve the communication rules and conduct effective supervision on the network anomie behavior; finally, we should guide and standardize the offline communication of students and strengthen guidance of educational administration departments and administrators in Colleges and Universities for students’ online and offline communication habits to stimulate and guide students to move from virtual community to real life community, cultivate good personality in the real world and promote students to bring real good communication characters and ways into virtual community, achieving the purpose of purifying network environment eventually.

The essence of man is the sum of all social relations. Habermas also stressed that the communication behaviors of mutual understanding and coordination between the subjects only exists in the life world of the communication subjects, and the communication behaviors separated from the life world are difficult to become rational communication. Rationality is not our inborn self-possession, it is shaped and gradually acquired in the process of interaction with others.\textsuperscript{[13]} As an extension and supplement of real communication in the network world, network communication takes up an increasing proportion in social communication, but it cannot be allowed to replace the interpersonal communication in the real society. Living in the real world, people will eventually return to the real world.

Acknowledgement

This article is in the Teaching research project "Marxist Theory Research and Discipline Construction Plan project of China University of Geosciences, Wuhan " No. MX1903.

Reference

[1] Changying Luo. (2008), “Communication alienation theory of modern western philosophy and its contemporary significance”, Science and technology information (Academic Research), No. 12, pp. 467+469.

[2] Fengcai Wang. (2003), “A review of Habermas' communicative behavior theory”, Journal of theory, No. 5, pp. 38-41.

[3] (German) Eugene Habermas. (2004), Communicative Behavior Theory, translated by Weidong Cao, 1st ed., vol. 1. Shanghai: People's publishing house. pp. 95.

[4] Suxia Li, Haiyan Yu.(2003), “A review of Habermas' communicative behavior theory”, Journal of Hebei Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences), No. 4, pp. 46-50.

[5] Bo Zhou.(2010),“Habermas' communicative behavior theory and Its Enlightenment”, Journal of Shenyang University, No. 6, pp. 106-108.

[6] Guoqiang Feng. (2015), “Analysis of students’ network communication from the perspective of communicative action theory”, Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Education Science Edition), No. 2, pp. 81-83.

[7] Gang Feng. (2018), “Internet thinking and innovative development of Ideological and Political Education”, School party building and ideological education, No. 3, pp. 4-8.
[8] China Internet Network Information Center. (2018). The 41st statistical report on China's Internet development, [online] Available: http://www.cac.gov.cn/2018-01/31/c_1122346138.htm.

[9] Yanli Dai, Sumei Feng. (2016), “The Enlightenment of Habermas' communicative behavior theory on the "bow tribe" of college students”, Academic exploration, No. 01, pp. 48-52.

[10] Guofeng Zhang. (2001), Utopia conception of a just world: Interpretation of Habermas' theory of communicative action, 1st ed. Jinan: Shandong people's publishing house. pp. 21.

[11] Yunqing Liu, Meiling Su, Qiusheng Huang. (2015), “Analysis of Network Communicative Behavior Anomie from the perspective of communicative behavior theory”, Ideological and political education research, No. 06, pp. 109-112.

[12] Stride forward toward a powerful network country-A review of the development of Internet and information industry since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, [online] Available: http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/n1/2018/0420/c1001-29938031.html.

[13] Silin Ai, Hao Chen. (2010), “‘Autonomy’ or ‘universality’?—Habermas talks about the dilemma of ethics”, Marxism and reality, No. 04, pp. 113-118.