

Research on the Perspective of Hosts in Television Personality Special Programs: A Case Study of "Voice"

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Abstract: With the development of social and scientific technologies, television special programs have diversified into various types based on style, content, and form. Among these, personality specials are particularly distinctive. As an important component of television specials, these programs focus on depicting real-life individuals and events, aiming to present authentic people and stories while deeply respecting and portraying human nature. The narrative perspective in television personality specials significantly affects the audience's reaction; the relationship between the narrator and the subjects influences the audience's understanding of the story. This paper uses the program "Voice" as a case study. It is divided into five sections: the first explores the concept of narrative perspective; the second analyzes three common narrative perspectives used by hosts; the third examines the narrative style of the host through program analysis; the fourth discusses the specific narrative perspectives of Sa Beining; and the fifth explains the changes in narrative perspectives in the era of new media and scientific advancement, providing explanations for the corresponding basic concepts.

Keywords: Television Personality Special Programs, Narrative Perspective, "Voice"

1. Introduction

The famous French literary theorist Gérard Genette, in his work "Narrative Discourse," introduced the theory of narrative perspective, which he termed "narrative focus." This refers to the practice of observing and analyzing a story through narrative language, which can present different aspects from various angles [1]. This is exemplified by the saying, "A thousand readers, a thousand Hamlets," indicating that different people will derive different meanings from the same story depending on their perspectives. Structuralist critics have extensively studied the forms of narrative perspective and have developed their own systems. They categorize narrative perspectives into three types: omniscient, internal, and external [2]. The choice of narrative perspective not only determines how information is received from different angles but also influences the mode of reception. Character narration allows readers to step into the characters' roles, creating a sense of being there and a realistic feeling of immersion. Similar to Stanislavski's system of acting, which emphasizes that actors should immerse themselves in their roles as if they are experiencing life, focusing on experience while also transcending the stage with a subjective consciousness of controlling it [3]. This emphasizes the subjectivity of the actor in performance, placing oneself in a god-like perspective to experience and advocate for the ultimate task. Hosts adopt different narrative perspectives to ensure effective

character presentation, all aimed at achieving specific objectives. In this context, the host acts like the "invisible artist" described by Shakespeare [4]. The "invisible artist" refers to the secret agent that the author inserts into the world of the characters, sometimes even as the protagonist. In this role, the host, as the supreme protagonist, enhances the development and portrayal of characters within the program. Throughout the progress of the program, the host adopts an omniscient viewpoint to continually advance the portrayal of these invisible characters. The narrative approach of the host is crucial in the presentation of a personality special, as different methods of narration can lead to different portrayals of characters. Thus, it is essential to delve further into the classification of hosts' narrative perspectives.

2. Multiple Host Narrative Perspectives in Programs

Genette regards "narrative perspective" as a professional academic term, so in his essay "Narrative Discourse," he chooses the more abstract term "focus" to discuss this issue in detail, dividing narrative perspectives into three angles: "zero focus, internal focus, and external focus" [5]. Zero focus means the narrator overshadows the characters, a narrative perspective commonly known in TV programs. For example, the narration of cases in "Today's Talk" under zero focus perspective allows viewers to experience the entire process from the occurrence to the investigation of a case through a second-person perspective. Additionally, internal and external focus perspectives contrast character relationships, where the relationship between the narrator and the characters can deeply integrate into the viewers' understanding. Beyond the sole statements of the narrator, the host's narration is key in creating different viewer opinions under various perspectives [6]. Some hosts may describe events from a more objective standpoint, leading viewers to a more conservative view of events. Others may add more subjective elements in their narration of certain programs, thus achieving contrasting narrative effects at two different levels, which is the absolute effect of narrative action.

2.1. Zero Focus Perspective

As the name suggests, the zero focus perspective is akin to an omniscient viewpoint. Through the host's description, viewers can fully experience the entire course of events, gaining a participatory sense and following the trend and direction of the events from a god-like perspective, thus fulfilling the ultimate narrative task [7]. In Chinese television personality programs, most undergo prior rehearsals where hosts anticipate any potential emergencies and adjust accordingly, ensuring the host remains the primary narrator, elevated above the characters and the program itself. This is similar to Stanislavski's system, which requires hosts to experience the recording process and maintain a detached engagement throughout [8]. Under the zero focus perspective, hosts can better control the progress of the program. For example, in talk shows, the host typically serves as the program's nucleus, extending and elevating the discourse. Whether it's reworking the second discourse in character narration or acting with original intent, it enables a unique portrayal of characters. In the zero focus perspective, the host assumes a significant role, meaning that under this perspective, the host has greater mastery and control over the content being conveyed. As the host gradually assumes an absolute position within the zero focus perspective, they can fully master the progress of the program.

2.2. Internal Focus Perspective

The internal focus perspective, where the narrator is embedded within the story, allows the audience to hear only the narrator's single perspective. This results in a limited authenticity of the narrative, as seen in interview programs where both the host and the interviewee are on equal footing. This perspective enhances the depth of personal experiences shared by adding layers to the host's perfected narration [9]. In "Voice," when characters narrate from a self-centered viewpoint, it is the internal

focus perspective, where all narrative efforts serve to present their own stories. Thus, the focus of character narration forms a nucleus around which related descriptions revolve, creating an internal focus. The audience, immersed in an atmosphere created by the narrator through a first-person perspective, experiences a deep educational immersion. Therefore, under the internal focus perspective, the audience's engagement and participation in the story are at their highest. This paper, by comparing various narrative perspectives, aims to highlight more issues and explain the narratology of television programs through the analysis of these different perspectives.

2.3. External Focus Perspective

The external focus perspective, also known as the observer's perspective, involves the narrator describing events from the periphery, playing a traditional supportive role. In this perspective, the host objectively describes the content of the corresponding narrative [10]. The external focus allows the narrator to engage in storytelling from a perspective that stands apart from the story itself, serving three functions: listening, guiding, and accompanying; shaping the experiencer; and facilitating personalized communication. Under the internal focus perspective, the audience tends to prefer the experiencer's sense of immersion, similar to the experiential feeling in the Stanislavski system. This requires a delicate balance of being above the character yet close to life, achieving a controlled detachment. This actor-like experience in performance translates into the function of the external focus perspective in narration.

3. Exploration of the Host's Narrative Style in Television Programs

In the structure of television programs, the host occupies a pivotal role and directly carries the narrative discourse. Sa Beining, since hosting "Today's Talk" and participating in several CCTV cultural programs, has also hosted variety shows like "Voice" and "Outstanding Chinese." His hosting style in these variety programs reflects his humorous, knowledgeable, and emotionally intelligent expressions, which are central to his role in television. The style of the host plays a decisive role in defining the program's identity and its ratings. Different hosts with different narrative perspectives can significantly influence the program. Here, we will elaborate on Sa Beining's hosting style from several perspectives [11].

3.1. Humor and Wit

"Voice" is a public youth television program produced by CCTV, which invites a guest each episode to share their story, ranging from professors in the scientific community to business elites, serving as role models for young people to learn from. These guests share their life experiences, reflecting the current societal impact on youth [12]. Sa Beining's humorous and witty hosting style is a key factor in attracting a large audience to the program. His use of conversational language makes the interaction between guests and the audience lively and engaging. In terms of attire, Sa often rolls up the sleeves of his shirts during hosting, adding a casual and relaxed touch that perfectly matches the youthful target demographic, creating a comfortable atmosphere on set. This positioning of the program has allowed Sa Beining's shows to become well-known and develop a unique personal style and preference. The planning of the program is significantly influenced by Sa's distinctive style, positioning him at the forefront of top television hosts.

3.2. Calm and Considerate, Keeping the Big Picture in Mind

During the hosting of a program, it's inevitable that disagreements arise between the audience and guests, making the host's position crucial. In the show "Only You," when Feng Shaofeng faced a film

doctorate returnee from France, he initially asked several challenging questions. Later, when facing a female boss's poor French, he sided with her and questioned whether she was acting, which intimidated the job seeker to the point of collapse. In retrospect, online discussions revealed that the problem indeed lay with the female boss's French. However, the controversy among netizens arose from Feng Shaofeng's attitude. As a host, he should not express too much of a personal opinion. Unlike Feng's sarcastic hosting style on "Only You," Sa Beining tends to maintain a neutral stance in interactions between the audience and guests. For instance, when a young man questioned Jeff Chang on "Voice" about being a has-been, Chang did not deny it, but when Sa Beining had the opportunity to respond, he used Michael Jordan's status to refute the notion of being washed-up. In many programs, Sa maintains a humble demeanor; even when teased by colleagues and the audience, he skillfully avoids embarrassment with humor. By using self-deprecation, he positions himself at the center of the discourse, controlling the show's direction without causing displeasure. His unique approach enhances the artistic style of hosting, making the viewing experience comfortable for the audience [13].

3.3. Extensive Knowledge

As CCTV's leading host, Sa Beining has hosted a variety of programs, displaying his profound linguistic skills and extensive knowledge across variety, legal, and cultural shows. Another label attached to him is that of a law master's degree holder from Peking University. This label has transformed in personal descriptions and netizen reactions into "Guaranteed Brother." As a host, especially of cultural programs, knowledge is an essential tool. It's a crucial means for hosts to establish a distinctive brand image and to deepen the audience's impression of their programs. As a key cultural communicator, Sa often recites classical Chinese poetry in his shows, showcasing national culture.

4. The Role of Narrative Perspectives in the Program "Voice"

4.1. The Role of Zero Focus Perspective

4.1.1. Control of the Scene

In a television program, the primary task of the host is to guide the content into the audience's view. From the perspective of the audience, the host uses verbal expressions throughout various segments of the program, continuously organizing the information and advancing the progression of the show [14]. Under the zero focus narrative perspective, the host needs a comprehensive understanding of all aspects to narrate effectively, mastering all the content and information of the program. Even if the host is not physically present in certain video or audio segments, they must still have an in-depth understanding of these parts. This indicates that the host's narrative technique combines visibility with invisibility. To meet the demands of program planning, the host sometimes expresses themselves in front of the camera, during voiceovers, or behind the scenes. This method not only enhances the orderliness and completeness of the program but also does not diminish the host's influence. On the contrary, it helps innovate narrative techniques and actively shapes a unique narrative style. Therefore, this section explores the three major functions of zero focus narration using "Voice" as a specific case study, examining how zero focus narrative achieves its value and significance in television programs.

4.1.2. Sense of Interaction

The "sense of interaction" plays a bridging role between the program host and the audience. To improve the quality and impact of their discourse, hosts must enhance their grasp of the "object sense"

to achieve the transmission and exchange of information. To break free from the limitations of an echo chamber, in a zero focus narrative perspective, although the hosts are familiar with the beginning and end of the events, they still need to think about how to narrate better [15]. As the story unfolds, it becomes easier to capture the audience's attention, making it easier for them to accept and achieve the ultimate goal of the performance, thereby establishing a positive interactive relationship with the audience. In this, the role of the junior host is crucial; they not only need solid professional qualities but also should possess a certain charisma and appeal. Although in traditional programs hosts are mostly in the studio, interacting with the audience facing the camera without direct contact, because they narrate from a zero focus perspective, the hosts' mastery of the full story keeps their emotions in a state of flux, thus establishing a more accurate "object sense" in the narrative process, resonating emotionally with the audience, enhancing the program's visual treatment, and making some dry knowledge more interesting.

4.1.3. Establishing Trust

Establishing trust is crucial to the performance effectiveness of a program. In various programs, the audience's trust in the host determines whether the program will be accepted by the public. In a zero focus narrative perspective, the host is an independent, objective narrator, typically using the third person to narrate. From a macro perspective, the host explains the background, presenting the overall narrative logic. Although the audience is passively guided and arranged logically, at the beginning of the story when the audience is unfamiliar with the characters and events, and as the story progresses when off-screen explanations are needed to help the audience understand and connect the dots, the omniscient and omnipotent narration under the zero focus perspective better adapts to people's cognitive habits. At this point, everything narrated by the host is considered authoritative and true, and the host becomes a synonym for "objective." Thus, under the zero focus narrative perspective, it is easier for the host to gain the audience's trust and affection. The host leads the audience into the story, permeates the development of the entire story, and plays a guiding role in the overall emotional expression of the work, determining the emotional tone and better showcasing the complete picture of the story. Throughout the narration of the entire story, the host's role as a trustworthy figure is demonstrated.

4.2. Functions of External Focused Perspective

4.2.1. Listening Role of the Host

In television programs featuring personalities, the host's focused narrative perspective is primarily applied during interviews. From an internal focus perspective, both the host and the interviewee are within the story, narrating and explaining it from their own perspectives. Throughout the collaborative process of storytelling, the host assumes the functions of listening, guiding, and accompanying at various stages. A program relies heavily on the interaction between the host, guests, and audience. During interactions with guests, the host's ability to establish rapport with the audience profoundly affects the program's effectiveness. Sa Beining, with his relatively lively personality, resonates with the audience to varying degrees in the multiple programs he hosts. In one episode of "Voice," when guest Chen Kun was questioned by a university student in the audience about the authenticity of his charity work, Sa Beining skillfully defused the skepticism with light-hearted humor and witty language. Chen Kun's charitable initiative, named "The Power of Walking," aimed to help those in need of solace through hiking, which could be seen more as a spiritual redemption. However, this charity work was accused of being a publicity stunt. The female student in the audience even used Chen Kun's celebrity status to pressure him into making donations, rather than focusing on this seemingly pointless charity. By directly addressing the core issue with a proverb, "Give a man a fish

and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime," Sa Beining succinctly conveyed what Chen Kun struggled to express, earning Chen Kun's approval. Moreover, he elevated the discussion of this charity project in the conclusion, winning applause from the audience. It is Sa Beining's high emotional intelligence and adept summarization that ingeniously defused the fundamental contradiction and mitigated the conflict. By deeply understanding the occurrences and listening to various situations, he sublimated them. This demonstrates the rendering effect of the listening role in the context of the external focused perspective in television programs.

4.2.2. Experience Advocacy Based on Stanislavski's Acting System

The performance of hosts in television programs can be compared to Stanislavski's advocacy of experientialism. The Stanislavski acting system suggests that actors on stage should exist between themselves and their characters. Similarly, hosts, as actors, should not completely lose control on stage but should hide themselves within their roles. They adopt a style of experientialism. During the broadcast of a program, hosts should focus more on hosting the show with a relaxed demeanor, hiding their true thoughts to achieve a state higher than the passing of time. Like Stanislavski's method, which emphasizes the actor's authentic experience on stage rather than mere imitation or performance, television hosts also need to show their true selves in the program, rather than merely playing a role. They need to maintain a relaxed state in front of the camera, conceal their innermost thoughts, yet integrate these thoughts into the program to add depth and substance. This style of experientialism demands that hosts maintain a high level of sensitivity and self-awareness throughout the program. They must constantly monitor their emotional fluctuations to better control the pace and atmosphere of the show. Additionally, they need to finely adjust their language and behavior to ensure the authenticity and credibility of the program content. Under the influence of this hosting style, television programs can transcend mere passage of time, creating a unique artistic experience. While enjoying the program, the audience can also feel the host's genuine emotions and depth of thought, thus forming a deeper resonance with the program. In conclusion, comparing television hosts to Stanislavski's experientialism helps further understand their roles and functions in the program. Only by truly immersing themselves in the role and experiencing the program can hosts elevate the program to a higher artistic realm, providing the audience with a more genuine and profound artistic experience.

5. Conclusion

Narrative perspective uses narrators and characters in the story as mediums to establish a narrative focus. Whether in literary works or in film and television productions, narrators do more than simply convey the narrative perspective to the audience to clearly tell the story; they also introduce conflicts and contradictions through the choice of narrative perspective, thus engaging the audience's interest. To create compelling narratives with dynamic thinking, the narrative perspective serves as a crucial link between creators, narrators, and characters. In television personality specials, the use of various narrative perspectives by hosts, through adaptive transitions and integration of these perspectives, allows for more nuanced character development, enhances expressiveness, and maintains the integrity of objectivity and documentary quality. This approach stimulates the audience's interest in watching without sacrificing artistic quality and encourages them to participate in the narrative. Narration is not just the act of telling stories; it is also a conveyance of the meaning of life and the significance of events. This article, through an exploration of television personality specials and using "Voice" as a case study, delves into the impact of different narrative perspectives on different characters within various programs. Whether analyzing the broader hosting style or dissecting the narrower narrative angles, mastering these techniques requires continuous accumulation by any host. It is Sa Beining's deep understanding and practice of narrative perspectives that make his programs distinctly unique.

Furthermore, the television personality special "Voice" continues to hold significant research value today.

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