

A Study on Discourse Construction in News Vlogs: A Multimodal Analysis Based on CCTV News Vlog 'The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy'

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of the short video era, the form of news dissemination has undergone profound changes. News vlogs, as a new type of reporting method that combines professionalism and socialisation, have gradually become an important medium for the dissemination of current affairs news. This paper takes CCTV News's 'Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy' series of vlogs as its research object and uses multimodal discourse analysis theory and a macro-to-micro research method to explore how news vlogs use multiple symbolic modalities such as language, visuals, and audio to construct discourse meaning and achieve innovation in political communication.

KEYWORDS

News vlog; Discourse construction; Multimodal analysis; Current affairs news; 'The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy'.

1 Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of the integrated media short video era, new media formats have emerged in rapid succession. As Henry Jenkins said, 'Media convergence is reshaping our communication ecosystem.' Against this backdrop, news vlogs have emerged as a new form of communication that combines professional reporting with personalised storytelling, and have gradually become an important choice for mainstream media in their innovative communication strategies. Under the impact of new technologies, traditional mainstream media outlets such as CCTV are actively exploring paths for transformation and upgrading, and continuously innovating content formats. Compared with traditional television discourse, news vlogs have distinct contemporary characteristics and significant value. Since its launch in 2019, CCTV News' 'Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy' series of vlogs has adopted a documentary style, presenting the sights, sounds, and behind-the-scenes stories of 'great power diplomacy' from the first-person perspective of CCTV News anchors through short videos, sparking widespread online attention and discussion. CCTV News' series of vlogs, 'The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy,' has created new discourse construction characteristics for current affairs news in the new media environment. Through a multi-modal collaborative discourse strategy, it has successfully achieved a 'breakthrough' effect in political communication, maintaining the authority of official media while enhancing its appeal to younger audiences. This innovative discourse model provides replicable experience for building a new mainstream public opinion platform, while also exploring new paths for 'telling China's story well' in international communication.

2 News vlogs have achieved innovation in political reporting through multimodal discourse reconstruction

2.1 Innovation in language modality

The innovative use of language in 'The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy' reflects mainstream media's breakthrough exploration of how to express current affairs news in the era of short videos. By reconstructing the logical structure of traditional news language, the programme has significantly enhanced its appeal and audience acceptance while maintaining political seriousness, establishing a language innovation model with exemplary significance.

In terms of language style, the programme breaks away from the traditional written style of political reporting and makes extensive use of colloquial narrative. Journalists replaced formal reporting language with everyday expressions such as 'Let's visit' and 'Guess who we'll meet today,' transforming formal diplomatic exchanges into easy-to-understand everyday conversations. For example, describing 'bilateral talks' as 'face-to-face discussions between the leaders of the two countries on cooperation' transforms abstract political concepts into concrete everyday scenarios, thereby lowering the threshold for audience understanding. This linguistic translation is not a simple replacement of words, but rather a narrative perspective that constructs a 'shared presence,' bringing the audience closer to the diplomatic event psychologically. In terms of pronoun usage, the programme reconstructs the relationship between sender and receiver through the flexible use of pronouns such as 'we' and 'you'. The traditional 'journalist reporting'

model commonly seen in traditional reporting has been transformed into an accompanying narrative that ‘takes you on an experience,’ with viewers shifting from passive recipients to ‘joint witnesses.’ For example, expressions such as ‘we see’ and ‘you may have noticed’ appear frequently in the commentary, which not only maintain the professional stance of the media, but also create a sense of dialogue, dispelling the stereotype of political news. This language strategy is particularly suited to the acceptance habits of young audiences, striking a balance between authority and approachability. In addition, the programme innovatively introduces interactive language design to encourage audience participation. By posing suspenseful questions to invite viewers to empathise, such as in the vlog on 14 September 2022, the question ‘Why did Kang Hui pack a piece of baked naan in his suitcase?’ ran through the entire video, transforming one-way communication into a simulated dialogue. This linguistic interaction is not only reflected in the text, but also resonates with visual and auditory modalities. For example, when presenting diplomatic protocol details, the question ‘Do you know the significance of this part?’ is used to guide the audience to actively pay attention to the information on the screen, thereby enhancing the immersive experience and memorability of the content. The linguistic innovation of ‘The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy’ is not a simple subversion of traditional news language, but rather the establishment of a new mode of expression that strikes a balance between the seriousness of political discourse and the accessibility of mass communication through a precise grasp of the laws of new media communication. This practice provides a reference path for the rejuvenation of political news dissemination, while also offering insight to mainstream media: the innovation of language modalities is not merely a matter of formal adaptation, but rather a critical breakthrough in the transformation of communication thinking from ‘informing’ to ‘dialogue.’

2.2 Visual presentation of personality

The visual innovation of ‘The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy’ has formed a visual style that combines professional journalism with communicative appeal by reconstructing the logic of political news reporting. The programme breaks away from the fixed camera language of traditional political reporting, using dynamic and humanised visual narrative strategies to transform serious diplomatic scenes into vibrant daily vlogs, providing a practical model for the transformation of visual expression in mainstream media.

In terms of cinematography, the programme makes extensive use of close-up shots to capture the details of diplomatic occasions. For example, changes in the strength of handshakes during summit meetings and subtle movements of the pen tip during signing ceremonies—these ‘non-verbal symbols’ that are often overlooked in traditional reporting are magnified and presented. The use of follow-camera shots breaks away from the traditional, formal reporting style. For example, the moving camera shots of reporters moving through the conference hall corridors not only show the real process of news gathering but also give viewers a first-person perspective and an immersive experience. In terms of scene selection, the programme innovatively juxtaposes the visual spaces of the ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage.’ Sociologist Erving Goffman proposed the theory of ‘dramaturgy,’ in which he defined the ‘front stage’ as the area where individuals behave as if they were performing on stage, and the ‘back stage’ as the area where individuals relax. Joshua Merowitz built on this foundation to propose the theory of ‘media context,’ arguing that the intervention of media creates a ‘middle zone’ that allows audiences to see both the traditional front stage and backstage areas simultaneously. The ‘Frontline of Major Country Diplomacy’ series of vlogs showcases the ‘middle zone’ of news production, presenting formal diplomatic ceremonies while interspersing behind-the-scenes footage of reporters checking scripts and adjusting equipment. For example, in the programme broadcast on 17 November 2024, the camera cut from the solemn scene of the China-US summit to President Biden hurriedly leaving after the meeting had ended. This contrast between the ‘front stage’ and “backstage” not only preserved the authority of the political news, but also constructed a credible image by exposing the ‘imperfect’ details of the production process. In Vlog news, the behind-the-scenes production of news is exposed, and a comprehensive perspective helps enrich the ‘information environment,’ enabling the public to see the full picture from multiple angles and creating an atmosphere that is closer to objective reality. The use of visual symbols highlights cultural identity. The programme emphasises the incorporation of visually striking national symbols into the composition of the images: the waving national flag is blurred in the background, reinforcing the solemnity of the diplomatic occasion while avoiding a clichéd accumulation of symbols; close-ups of traditional patterns on the state banquet tableware integrate the dissemination of cultural soft power into everyday diplomatic settings. In cross-border reporting, the camera deliberately captures moments when the cultural symbols of both sides blend together. For example, during the China-Africa Forum, African leaders dressed in traditional clothing were photographed together with Chinese-style architecture in the background, using visual metaphors to convey the diplomatic concept of ‘harmony in diversity.’

2.3 Optimisation of auditory experience

‘The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy’ has undergone systematic innovation in its audio design, effectively

enhancing the communicative impact of current affairs news through the refined processing of sound elements. While maintaining its professional nature, the programme explores auditory expression methods that are suited to the characteristics of short video dissemination. Firstly, the programme focuses on accurately reproducing the original sounds of the news scene, such as the music played before the summit meeting, the cheers of the crowd, and the background noise of journalists talking with foreign guests. The preservation of these sounds is not simply a technical record, but a conscious effort to convey information through the details of the sounds. For example, in the April 2025 programme, Gang Qiang recorded the cheers of the crowd in the background while waiting for President Xi Jinping to exit the aircraft. This 'unedited' sound processing not only presented the real state of the news scene but also allowed the audience to feel the atmosphere of the diplomatic event.

The reporter's commentary adopts a natural tone that falls between formal broadcasting and everyday conversation, avoiding both the traditional news broadcast style and overly entertaining expressions. For example, when reporting on serious diplomatic statements, reporters will slow down their speech and emphasise key words; when talking about interesting cultural exchanges, they will use a lighter tone and popular internet slang. This dynamic adjustment in the way of speaking ensures the authority of the content while also giving the audience a sense of intimacy, as if they were engaging in face-to-face communication. The use of background music reflects the professional considerations of the programme. The programme selects light music with cultural relevance as a supplement, rather than forcing emotions. For example, in the special edition of the China-France leaders' talks, the background music alternates between a piano version of 'Jasmine Flower' and French accordion melodies. The music only appears during scene transitions or emotional climaxes. This 'unobtrusive' musical treatment not only uses sound symbols to suggest the cultural integration between China and France, but also ensures the clear transmission of core information. The auditory optimisation strategy of 'The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy' is essentially an adaptive adjustment by mainstream media to the laws of new media communication. Through the authenticity of sound, the warmth of human voices, the supporting role of music, and the contextualisation of ambient sounds, the programme maintains the serious core of current affairs news while constructing a more inclusive auditory communication system. This practice demonstrates that innovation in political communication does not seek to overturn tradition, but rather to find a more precise balance between professional expression and audience acceptance.

3 Multimodal collaboration has constructed a new type of transmission relationship and enhanced audience political participation

3.1 Innovation in interactive formats

CCTV News Vlog 'The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy' has significantly innovated the interactive format of traditional political reporting through a multi-modal collaborative strategy, effectively stimulating engagement among young audiences. Firstly, the immersive perspective and sense of presence are key breakthroughs, with extensive use of first-person handheld tracking shots and close-ups, combined with ambient sounds to create a sense of immediacy in both visual and auditory modalities. This sense of 'presence' breaks down the distance between current affairs news and its audience, allowing young viewers to transform from "bystanders" into 'witnesses.'

Secondly, the programme actively incorporates content from the comment sections and bullet screens of platforms such as Bilibili and Douyin into the video's re-production. For example, in the special edition marking the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, the reporter read out a question from a netizen: 'What are the new highlights of this summit?' and then provided an answer. This 'audience question-journalist response' audio-visual closed loop creates a simulated dialogue scenario, enabling audience feedback to directly participate in meaning production and reinforcing the perception of the communication subject. The programme frequently uses dynamic text, internet slang and other visual text modalities, accompanied by light background music. In the special promotional video commemorating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, the editing technique of 'China-France collaboration' was incorporated to stimulate cultural identity. The appropriation of these youth cultural symbols significantly lowers the cognitive threshold for political communication, encouraging audiences to shift from 'watching' to "sharing" and 'thinking,' thereby achieving a chain reaction of participatory behaviour.

3.2 Reconstructing the affinity of discourse

The ultimate effectiveness of multimodal collaboration is reflected in the behavioural transformation of the audience. The traditional perception that political news is 'irrelevant to me' has been broken: when viewers see leaders showing family photos on their phones during breaks in talks in a vlog, hear reporters explain that 'heads of state are also ordinary people' in voiceovers, accompanied by warm piano music, the image of political figures descends from the "clouds" to

the 'earth.' This three-dimensional communication has prompted young viewers to actively discuss 'the impact of diplomacy on life' in the comments section, initiate topic interactions on Weibo, and even create their own interpretations of memorable quotes from the commentary. The shift from passive viewing to active participation marks the successful establishment of a new type of communication relationship. This practice demonstrates that the rejuvenation of political communication cannot be limited to superficial 'trendy reforms,' but must instead be achieved through multimodal coordination to reconstruct the fundamental logic of communication. When serious diplomatic issues are transformed into three-dimensional narratives that can be heard, seen, and felt, and when audiences transform from 'bystanders' to 'participants,' the information gap between generations naturally disappears. This innovation not only provides inspiration for mainstream media to enhance their communication effectiveness, but also, in a deeper sense, promotes the paradigm shift of political communication from 'institution-centric' to 'user-centric,' exploring new paths for building a healthy political communication ecosystem.

3.3 Diversification of participation paths

Multimodal collaboration has significantly broadened the channels for audience political participation, driving a shift in their role from passive recipients to active participants and co-creators of content. This transformation is mainly reflected in lower cognitive thresholds, stronger emotional mobilisation, and behavioural change. Its core lies in using the complementary synergy of audio-visual elements to transform complex political information into content that is perceptible, interactive, and easy to disseminate, thereby triggering a chain reaction of participatory behaviour. News vlogs reinforce political identity through iconic visual symbols and emotional audio design. For example, in the special feature on the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, a time-lapse photography of the Eiffel Tower and the Canton Tower was accompanied by a medley of 'Jasmine Flower' and 'La Marseillaise' as background music to create cultural resonance. This multimodal emotional mobilisation extends to behavioural guidance, forming a closed loop of 'emotional identification-clue provision-result witnessing.' This innovative approach provides a key methodological support for mainstream media to enhance the effectiveness of political communication.

4 News vlogs drive the integration and upgrading of political news reporting

4.1 Lightweight communication channels

Traditional political reporting has lost its young audience due to rigid formats and platform mismatches, while 'The Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy' has achieved a revolutionary breakthrough by leveraging multimodal lightweight translation. The programme adopts a horizontal screen vlog format that is precisely tailored to mobile scenarios and fits in with the usage habits of short video platforms. Dynamic, colourful subtitles incorporate popular internet terms, achieving intergenerational alignment in discourse systems. For example, the trending topic #Kang Hui transforms into an 'airport blogger' to welcome French President Macron# topped the Douyin hot list, marking the first time that political content has achieved a double breakthrough in terms of traffic and age structure.

4.2 Immersive interaction mechanism

News vlogs use first-person narrative, multi-sensory channels, and user-participatory design to reconstruct the interactive logic of political reporting, transforming audiences from 'information receivers' to 'scene participants.' First, reporters use handheld devices to film, synchronising the audience's view with the news scene. For example, in a 2019 report on Greek diplomacy, Kang Hui used selfies to show the details of the changing of the guard ceremony at the presidential palace, accompanied by voice-over commentary saying, 'We are now standing in front of the gates of the presidential palace,' which gave the audience a sense of being 'eyewitnesses.' This 'the camera is the human eye' perspective broke the traditional 'third-person observer' model of political reporting. Secondly, original sound recording has replaced artificial dubbing. For example, in the 2023 Belt and Road Forum Vlog, the footsteps and conversations of leaders from various countries were recorded, allowing the audience to experience the scene through sound positioning. Finally, dynamic information layers enhance cognitive depth. The Global Development Initiative 3D animation is overlaid with real-life footage shot by journalists, increasing audience retention of key policy points.

4.3 Normalisation of participation behaviour

News vlogs promote political participation among young audiences, transforming it from an occasional activity into a regular practice through institutionalised interactive design and continuous scenario construction. The core of this

transformation lies in establishing a closed-loop mechanism of 'collection-response-feedback,' embedding participatory behaviour into the daily communication chain and forming a sustainable model of civic action. Mainstream media outlets rely on Vlogs to build stable user engagement interfaces, attracting audiences to pay attention to and discuss current affairs. Other media outlets followed suit, creating a trend of focusing on news. The essence of regular participation is the implementation of participatory culture in the field of political communication: mainstream media outlets open up discourse and include audiences in the network of meaning production, constructing a communication ecosystem of 'institution-user' collaborative evolution. Its innovation lies in breaking through the limitations of traditional political reporting, which is driven by events, and ensuring the sustainability of participation through mechanism design, thereby providing a paradigm for mainstream media to reshape their public nature in the age of algorithms.

5 Conclusion

The practical exploration of 'The Frontline of Major-Country Diplomacy' provides an enlightening model for the transformation of mainstream media's political reporting in the new media era. This paper uses multimodal discourse analysis to find that news vlogs, through innovative language, form, and communication logic, not only break down the barriers of traditional political news, but also build a new dialogue between political communication and young audiences. The core value of this transformation lies in the fact that it proves that the effectiveness of serious content dissemination does not depend on whether the form is conservative or innovative, but rather on whether it can accurately grasp the cognitive habits and emotional needs of the audience. The 'breakthrough' of current affairs news relies not only on content optimisation, but also on the systematic coordination of language, visual and auditory symbols. This synergy is both an adaptation to the laws of new media communication and a return to the essence of political communication—bringing policy discourse down from the 'clouds' to the 'earth,' maintaining authority while gaining emotional resonance. Of course, this transformation still faces balancing challenges. How to find the critical point between entertaining expression and in-depth information, and how to achieve effective communication in different cultural contexts, still need further exploration. However, the practice of 'The Frontline of Major Country Diplomacy' at least points to one direction: the integration and transformation of mainstream media is essentially a 'user-centric' communication revolution. When young audiences are willing to actively follow, discuss, and share political news, this participation itself is the best testament to the effectiveness of communication. In the future, the presentation of current affairs news may undergo even more profound changes. However, regardless of how the form evolves, the core logic remains unchanged: only by returning communication to the needs of 'people' and rooting political discourse in the soil of life can mainstream media truly achieve the organic unity of guidance, communication, and influence.

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