

Visual Analysis of Discursive Construction of Identity from the Perspective of Interactive Sociolinguistics

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Abstract

Using CNKI as the database, this paper uses CiteSpace 5.8.R3, a bibliometric tool, to make a visual analysis of journals related to the topic of identity discourse construction in Chinese language and literature, aiming to clarify the development context and observe the new development of identity discourse construction from the perspective of interactive sociolinguistics. This paper mainly analyzes the issues such as circulation over the years, topic attention, research hotspots and research frontiers. The visualization results show that the number of papers on the topic of “identity discourse construction” shows an increasing trend in general, and the growth has been particularly significant in recent years; The topic discussion mainly focused on “identity”, “discourse analysis”, “pragmatics” and so on. Future research can be further combined with new theories such as interactive sociolinguistics to make changes and increase the degree of discussion on other topics.

Keywords: discourse construction of identity, interactive sociolinguistics, dynamic view, construction view, visual analysis

1. Introduction

Everyone has an established identity in our society, but it is dynamically changing instead of static and unchanging condition. Identity plays a very important role in daily communication and life. It is the embodiment of self-image characteristics and the correlation point of interpersonal communication. Therefore, identity-related research has attracted the attention of many researchers, and has also become a major topic in sociolinguistic research. Accordingly, the study of identity discourse construction has been one of the major issues in the study of sociolinguistics.

With the further development of the research, identity construction has gradually become a topic of concern. The understanding of “identity construction” can be started from two parts: “identity” and “construction”. “Identity” refers to people’s interpretation of personal experience and social status in the social environment, and “construction” refers to the process of revision and correction. Therefore, “identity construction” can be understood as the process of continuous self-definition and self-correction. Identity construction owns interdisciplinary characteristics which is with a combination of social construction theory and basic linguistic theory, manifesting in its specific discourse

forms, identity types and research perspectives (Xiang, 2009). Analyzing problems in social sciences from the perspective of linguistic knowledge has also been a problem dealt with by sociolinguists. The combination of language system and sociology, such as social psychology and social pragmatics, is the mainstream direction of sociolinguistic research. In order to better understand and analyze the language features in the current background, sociolinguistics try their best to conclude communication strategies so as to achieve better results in language communication (Zhang, 2018). Meanwhile, identity is also named as "relation" or "relationship" in cultural context, thus the knowledge of culture and community also needs to be considered in the process of language use. Kiesling (2006) discussed identity in the background of sociocultural anthropology. This article holds the view that the main attention of research of language and identity concentrating on the interaction between global cultural categories, and the way which they are constructed or performed. With the development of the times and the depth of research, sociolinguistics has further established new branch systems, such as variant sociolinguistics and interactive sociolinguistics. This paper mainly analyzes the construction of identity discourse based on the characteristics of interactive sociolinguistics.

Interactive sociolinguistics is the study of the interactive process in which conversational participants reason, judge and respond to the speaker's communicative intention through contextual cues and background knowledge (National Committee for the Examination and Approval of Scientific and Technical Terms, 2012). It emphasizes the interaction process between the two sides of the communication, and achieves deeper communication through verbal interaction between the two sides. In recent years, a series of related studies involving in different linguistic environment have come forth. Canagarajah (2020) provided a review of the influence of neoliberal economic conditions on different workplace communication, in order to generate novel task structures and communicative practices. Linguistic communication in a bilingual environment is also an interesting perspective. Mirvahedi (2021) investigated how social structures and institutional discourses in the society influence the linguistic structures within a Malay-English

bilingual family living in Singapore. As expected, findings showed that their interactions and communications varied with the social environment. Therefore, interactive sociolinguistics advocates that people's communication is a dynamic process, which is gradually adapted in constant communication and interaction. This viewpoint breaks through the previous static and steady view of sociolinguistics, and puts verbal communication in a situation of mutual negotiation. The core view of interactive linguistics lies in social interaction, emphasizing communication and negotiation between two parties (Le, 2017). It can be combined with many disciplines, such as general linguistics, phonetics, conversational analysis, sociology, anthropology, and so on. This paper focuses on its integration with sociology, that is, interactive sociolinguistics. At present, the foreign research in this field has been more optimistic, but the domestic research on this topic is not much, the relevant theoretical or empirical literature is relatively few. Therefore, based on the theory of interactive linguistics, this paper analyzes the topic of identity discourse construction, which is related to this topic, with the aim of getting enlightenment from language research and interpersonal interaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Origin and Development of Identity Construction*

Identity or identification refers to the question of "who exactly am I?" for a person or group of people, and the answer can be subjective or objective (Gao et al., 2008). In the field of philosophy, people are often challenged by a question of "Who am I?" According to this question, there are two ways to express our views. The one is from the biological source, and the other can come from the social source. According to Marxist philosophy, human sociality is the essential attribute of human being, and it is the pillar which can provide a powerful support for us to establish human social circle and interpersonal relationship. Therefore, in the framework of sociolinguistics, "identity" is a term that needs to be considered from the aspect of social attributes, which maintains people's communication and activities in the social environment, and is an indispensable key in daily life.

The foundation of identity Construction comes

from Social Construction Theory, which challenges the original prevailing essentialism because of its emergence (Xiang, 2009). Essentialism believes that the nature of the world is always unchanged, and once it changes, there will be problems. People's status and position in society will not change, and people have no choice about it. However, social construction theory rejected this view as soon as it appeared. As mentioned above, the theory holds that everything in a society is constantly changing, and problems arise only when things remain static. The constant interaction of people in society offers the possibility of lasting change. The view of social construction theory coincides with that of interactive linguistics, and the fusion of the two becomes possible. However, this theory is not totally similar with the identity research related to pragmatics. Chen (2014) holds the view that pragmatics focuses on the identity attributes of both sides of communication, while social construction theory focuses more on social attributes. Pragmatics is more interested in exploring the communicative choices, strategies and effects made by communicators in specific situations and at specific moments. Therefore, the former focuses on the social and psychological attributes behind identity or construction itself, while pragmatics explores how communicators choose different ways of identity based on context to achieve certain communicative effects, mainly at the linguistic level (Chen, 2014). Thus, from the perspective of sociolinguistics, the construction of identity is dominated by sociology or social attributes, while the research on identity in the field of pragmatics is dominated by language representation or language communication, which is also one of the significant differences between the two disciplines. This paper focuses on the identity construction problem associated with interactive sociolinguistics, that is, the problem of social attributes.

2.2 Identity Discourse Construction

The theory of identity construction, which is derived from the combination of social construction theory and linguistics, has an interdisciplinary nature. It is an effective combination of both social attributes in sociology and language knowledge research in linguistics. Identity construction has been explored in discourse forms, identity types, and related research perspectives (Xiang, 2008). Among them, the study of discourse form is the

exploration of identity discourse construction involved in this paper. The term is the result of the further combination of identity construction theory and conversational knowledge, such as conversational analysis and discourse analysis. Discourse analysis originated in the 1970s, and its emergence benefited from the development of hermeneutics, structuralism and humanities and social sciences (Van Dijk, 1985; Bondarouk & Ruel, 2004). The language view of discourse analysis mainly draws on some features of interpretivism, which holds that language is the medium of our actions. In daily communication, people will consciously construct their own descriptions and views of the world or society (Elliot, 1996). The goal of discourse analysis is to reveal the relationship between discourse and the real world, and to discover the hidden meaning through various connections. In the linguistic system, conversation and discourse belong to the category of pragmatics, so the constituent system of this field is the knowledge system of pragmatics solving the problem of identity construction in sociology.

At present, the construction of identity discourse has been involved in various aspects of empirical research, such as teacher's classroom language, critical discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis and other topics to understand this concept. Guo & Chen (2019) have studied the status of identity construction in conflict discourse, but this study mainly explores the cognitive mechanism and learning process of conflict discourse from the communicative attributes of identity. However, most previous studies on conflict discourse focus on social attributes, and researchers believe that this behavior is first caused by social related factors, such as interest disputes. Yang (2014) made a relevant analysis of the characteristic point of discourse construction — the construction of transpersonal discourse. The acceptance speeches of athletes in international competitions were selected as special discourse materials, which involved relevant factors such as country, attitude and power. Therefore, such speeches have significant particularity. In recent years, the communicative value of network conversation has become a hot topic of research. Li (2021) has collected and described these new languages from the perspective of interactive sociolinguistics, and concluded that these languages are of higher value in ordinary online conversations because they can convey the

speaker's thoughts differently and participate in the conversation in a unique way. In addition, the article also points out that this phenomenon not only occurs in Chinese culture, but also exists in other languages, and calls for future research to develop in the direction of bilingual or multilingual, so as to supplement the existing research gap.

However, in the field of foreign languages and characters, there are not a small number of relevant researches, most of which focus on second language learning or pragmatic exploration. The bidirectional nature of identity construction and the identity inquiry of modal meaning have attracted attention, and the strong status of L2 learners as advisers in discourse is gradually weakened, and the degree of prominence of suggestions is also gradually reduced, which is the characteristic of Chinese foreign language learners in foreign language writing (Zhou, 2021). Related topics are also concentrated in family education, ethnic minority areas and discourse systems of middle-aged and elderly people. It can be seen that identity discourse construction is a hot topic that deserves our further attention.

2.3 An Interactive Sociolinguistic View of Identity

The concept of "interactive sociolinguistics" was first proposed by Gumperz in his article "The Development of Interactive Sociolinguistics". It deals with conversational strategies, contextual cues and formulations, as well as conversational meaning and inference, that is, observing the "interaction" of communicators during speech to infer the social concepts behind the behavior adopted by both parties (Gumperz, 1982). The Committee for the Review of Linguistic Terms also mentioned that interactive sociolinguistics refers to a detailed branch of sociolinguistics, in which discourse communicators need to judge, reason and then respond to the speaker's communicative intention based on the clues provided by the context and their own background knowledge. The key to this branch of sociolinguistics is "interaction", which is its characteristic feature. As can be seen from this definition, this new branch is closely related to the pragmatic principles of cooperation, speech acts, and conversational implicature, which are also issues of concern to interactive sociolinguistics, but at a more macroscopic social level than at the pragmatic level.

As a new branch of sociolinguistics, like variant

sociolinguistics, interactive sociolinguistics has gradually attracted the attention of researchers and become a research development trend. This emerging field focuses on the word "interaction", emphasizing interpersonal interaction or interpersonal negotiation, which puts two or more parties in a dynamic interaction process, which injects fresh viewpoints into the stage of static analysis. Therefore, interactive sociolinguistics has attracted a lot of attention during its development. Zhao and Feng (2020) summarized the future development trend of sociolinguistics in the new era of the first high-end international forum on sociolinguistics. It can be seen that scholars have realized the problems existing in the current research of Chinese sociolinguistics, and began to communicate and discuss more with international scholars, showing the inclusiveness of sociolinguistics. Therefore, the further development of interactive sociolinguistics is more possible.

Among them, the view of "identity" in interactive sociolinguistics is the problem of identity view in interactive sociolinguistics. Identity is no longer the established identity of the language user under the paradigm of variant sociolinguistics, but a dynamic concept constructed by the interacting parties through various linguistic means and resources and meaning negotiation in the interaction process (Wu Dongying et al., 2016). It can be seen that the theory emphasizes "interaction" and "dynamic" in all aspects, which are the characteristics of interactive sociolinguistics. Most relevant studies have also paid attention to the prominent characteristics of these two aspects, and this paper will also analyze the interactive turn under the construction of identity discourse from this point of view.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

- 1) How about the publications on the theme of "identity discourse construction" in the past years? What is the trend?
- 2) What are the hotspots and concerns of related research? And what aspects can be developed in the future?

3.2 Number of Publications over the Past Year

Based on the CNKI database, this paper searches a total of 240 relevant literatures in Chinese

academic journals with the keyword of “identity discourse construction”. After sorting and summarizing the data, visual analysis is made to

observe the number of papers published over the years, from which we can get enlightenment.

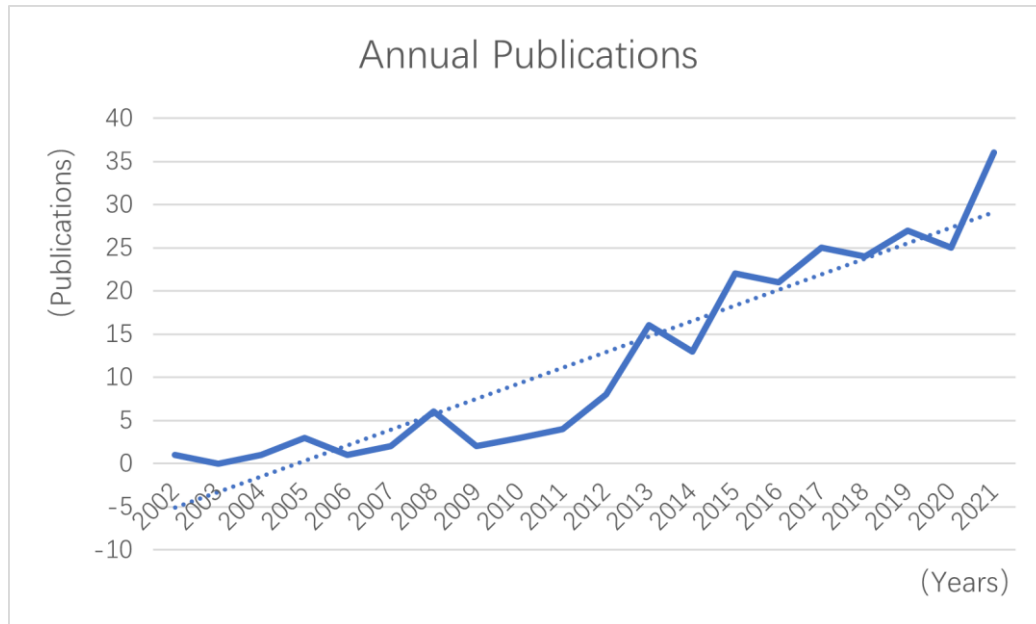


Figure 1. Number of papers published on the topic of “Identity Discourse Construction”

Through the literature index, it is found that the relevant literature on “identity discourse construction” began to be involved in domestic research in the early 21st century, but no relevant literature was collected in the CNKI database in previous years, which shows the novelty and value of this topic. As can be seen from the chart, the number of papers published on this topic has been increasing year by year, and has shown a steady increase in recent years. At the beginning of this century, due to the freshness of the topic and the lack of theory, there were not many researches in this field. However, with the development of research, there has been an obvious growth from around 2012, which reflects the vigorous development of this field. In recent years, the research is especially outstanding, and the annual growth rate is mostly maintained at about 25 articles, gradually increasing and growing steadily. Through data analysis, we can clearly observe the attention and popularity of the development of related topics, which has a strong guiding effect for future research. It can be seen that the theme of “identity discourse construction” has strong development and malleability, and the exploration of this field deserves further attention.

3.3 Focus of Attention

The number of posts can clearly show the overall situation of the development of the topic, while the keyword or sub-topic attention can further indicate the direction of the research. Therefore, this paper makes a visual analysis of the co-occurrence graph of subset concerns under the theme of “identity discourse construction”:

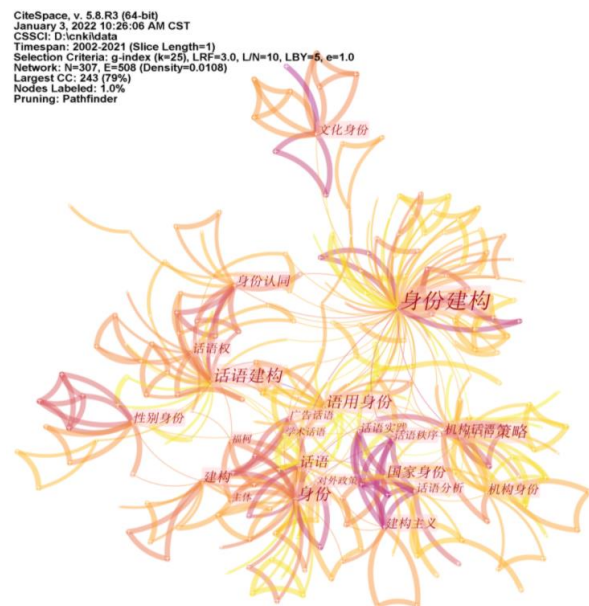


Figure 2. Keyword co-occurrence map of “Identity discourse Construction”

In this paper, CiteSpace 5.8.R3, a literature measurement tool developed by Professor Chen Chaomei, is used to carry out visual analysis on the co-occurrence of relevant literature keywords, check the Keyword option, the year period is 2002-2021, the time slice is 1, and finally Figure 2 is obtained. Through the keyword co-occurrence index, the hot topics, focus and scope of discussion can be directly observed. As shown in Figure 2, the key subsets such as “identity construction”, “identity”, “discourse construction” and “pragmatic identity” are dominant within the scope of this term, and there are more relevant literature studies in this area than other topics. It can be seen that this topic involves a wide range of research, including relevant studies at the pragmatic, institutional, national and other levels, but the number and degree of studies are not enough. Future studies should make contributions in these aspects as much as possible, instead of just focusing on the above topics.

3.4 Frontier of Development

This paper selects the period from 2016 to 2021 to carry out a visual analysis of the cutting-edge research on “identity discourse construction” from three aspects: near-modern, medium and low frequency, and intermediary centrality. As shown in Figure 3:

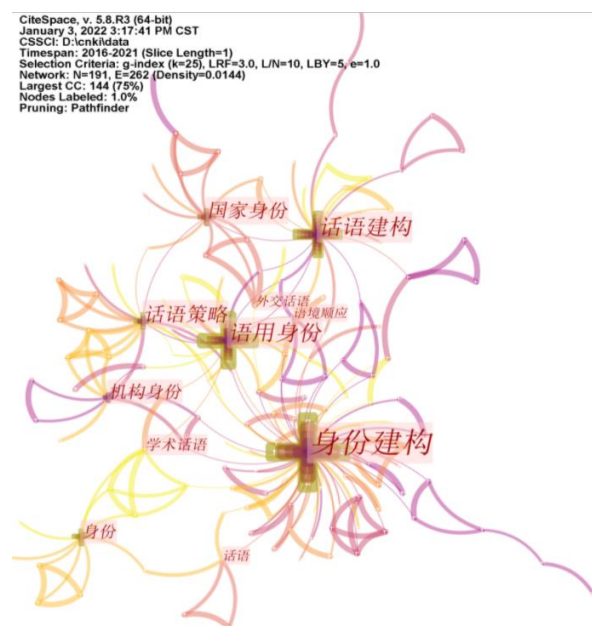


Figure 3.

The frontier of the subject should have the following characteristics: First, the year range should be the period of recent years, from which

the topic under discussion can be found; Secondly, the most frequently discussed topic is the current prevailing research topic, and the less frequently discussed topic still needs a long time to develop. Therefore, the topic of medium and high frequency should be the focus of frontier research; In addition, intermediary centrality also has certain value, whether it can become the focus of frontier research depends on whether this topic has the central characteristics of discussion value. As shown in Figure 3, “identity construction” is the most influential topic at present, followed by “discourse construction” and “pragmatic identity”. Medium and high frequency terms such as “national identity”, “discourse strategy”, “institutional identity”, etc. These concepts are located at the convergence node and have a certain radiation range, so future research can be further developed in these directions.

4. Research Methods of Discourse Interaction

For interactive sociolinguistics, different language varieties and features are regarded as discourse resources, which can be fully mobilized by speakers for self-presentation or interpersonal communication. Ethnographic studies centered on discourse can be used to reveal authentic discourse practices in context (Akkaya, 2014). As a new branch, some related research methods can also be combined with “body discourse construction” to further develop as a new research trend. For example, the relevant research methods of communicative ethnographer. Interactive linguistics is largely derived from the development of communicative ethnography. Ethnography refers to texts written as a result of fieldwork, which involves major methods such as participant observation, personal life history, and questionnaire surveys. Therefore, the ethnographic research method is highly realistic, and the degree of interpersonal communication is also highly reflected, which is similar to the mainstream value pursued by interactive sociolinguistics. At present, few researchers use ethnography as a research method to explore its impact on other disciplines and overall development, and most of them focus on humanistic care such as humanistic ethical values embodied in the writing process (Li & Gan, 2016). In recent years, ethnography has also integrated the research of other disciplines with its development, showing an interdisciplinary research trend, such as

meta-linguistic ethnography (Sang & Wang, 2020), educational ethnography (Wang, 2008), etc. Therefore, due to the similarities between ethnography and interactive linguistics, subsequent studies can combine the common points of the two to better analyze and study them.

Then, Conversation Analysis Theory (CA). The origin and development of interactive Linguistics (Interactional Linguistics) are closely related to the studies of disc-functional linguistics, conversational analysis and anthropolinguistics, especially since oral communication has been paid more attention to. Therefore, interactive linguistics involves interdisciplinary studies such as linguistics, phonetics, conversation analysis, sociology and anthropology (Le, 2017). Similarly, the interactive sociolinguistics explored in this paper will be more specific in its scope of study, focusing on the attribute study of social aspects. In the linguistic knowledge system, conversational analysis is part of pragmatics and plays a very important role in daily life and communication. Whether the dialogue between two or more parties can proceed smoothly and reach the satisfaction of both the speaker and the listener needs to be investigated in detail. As a new branch of pragmatics, conversation analysis also has great potential for development. At present, the relevant research mainly classifies and arranges the corpus of daily conversation, such as institutional conversation or daily conversation. A large number of studies also focus on the doctor-patient relationship, customer service and customer dialogue and other fields. In China, Professor Yu Guodong and Professor Wu Yaxin have been engaged in the study of conversation analysis, among which Professor Yu Guodong has made great achievements in the study of doctor-patient relationship. (Wang & Yu, 2021) The research found that patients' extended answers when seeking medical treatment have certain medical value, and doctors should give patients the time and power to extend answers to achieve better medical treatment results and alleviate the bad doctor-patient relationship to some extent. Conversational analysis involves a wide range, and its most distinctive feature is "interactive communication", which coincides with the main idea of interactive sociolinguistics.

Finally, although the focus of sociolinguistics and pragmatics is different, they have a lot in

common. For example, speech act theory can be used either simply to analyze representations in dialogue or to grasp them at a macro level. The principle of cooperation emphasizes mutual understanding, which bears some resemblance to the sociolinguistic problem of intelligibility. Therefore, disciplines should not draw clear boundaries, but should merge with each other to develop more novel ideas and theories.

5. Conclusion

This paper mainly carries out a visual analysis on the number of publications and keywords in the relevant literature of "identity discourse construction", and observes the attention of various topics and future cutting-edge research. From the traditional topic of "identity" and then combined with the new topic under interactive sociolinguistics, it also provides research methods of discourse interaction, which provides a reference for new related research. After analysis, it is found that as a new research trend, interactive sociolinguistics can be combined with a wide range of subject topics, which can be further studied with phonetics, pragmatics and other language disciplines in the future. This study also has some shortcomings: the text only analyzes the relevant literature of CNKI database in China, and introduces less foreign research. In the future, we can pay attention to the current development of relevant topics in foreign countries; Other visual analysis tools can also be used to analyze topics such as the most cited.

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