

The Dimension of Hearing and Cultural Construction in the History of Communication

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Keywords: Hearing culture, History of communication studies, Cultural constructions

Abstract: With the development of media technology, the media has become more and more focused on the visual turn, even facing “visual hegemony “. Academics and industry have begun to call for a return to aural culture. In the history of communication, the auditory turn is no longer a novelty. In this article, we look at the theories and perspectives on the auditory turn in the history of communication through three aspects: the tradition of hearing culture, the classification of auditory texts, and the contemporary value of hearing culture, in the hope that it can contribute to existing research and promote a balance of the senses in an intelligent media society.

1. Introduction

In the history of human development, spoken communication was the earliest form of information dissemination, and sound was instinctive to human. Over the centuries, as social forms have changed, so has the way of listening, and the content of listening has become richer and richer, and society has continued to shape this human behavior. In general, however, the visual has been more prominent in human civilization than the auditory, especially in the West, where visual metaphors are widely present in various communication theories. The recognized interdisciplinary study of hearing culture began in 2009 with the international symposium “Thinking about Listening: The Auditory Turn in the Humanities” held at the University of Texas at Austin [1], but the search for hearing culture has never stopped. The search for hearing culture has never stopped. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of listening research in the academy, to summarize its forms, and to reflect the relevance of hearing culture research.

2. The Traditions of Hearing Culture

From the Chinese perspective, “hearing” exists as an action that connects sound and meaning, and more meaningfully, “awareness”, where all culture begins with meaning [2]. According to linguistic data, in the minds of the ancient Chinese, the ear had three important functions: first, it was the organ of communication, which allowed communication with the outside world; second, it was the organ of thought, which allowed the acquisition of knowledge; and third, it was the organ of social affairs, which allowed the identification of right and wrong. Many of the ancient Chinese poems and scriptures include onomatopoeic words such as “The deer each to each bleat” and “The waterfowl would coo”, which also focus on depicting the various sounds of nature. The use of musical

instruments for burial and the importance of rituals and music in the pre-Qin period also reflect the tendency to attach importance to the sense of hearing at that time. Before the burning of books and Confucianism, there were six scriptures, and one of the lost scriptures was the “Music Sutra”. Xunzi's “Theory of Music” and “Book of Music” contain ancient Chinese concepts about government, religion and the universe[3]. The Tao” is the core of ancient Chinese philosophy. In his “Wenxin Diaolong”, Liu mentioned that “the Tao follows the sage to drape the text, and the sage makes the Tao clear because of the text. Yifeng Luo, by analyzing the relevant discussion in the Taoist classic Wenzhi, pointed out another way to “understand the way”: “listening to the way”. As a channel to connect society and nature, listening is a way of existence for human beings, and the ear is the mind's eye of the idea world, whose subjectivity is self-evident [4].

In western countries, the importance of hearing was emphasized in ancient Greek times. Aristotle, who discussed the human senses, believed that the sense of hearing was most closely linked to emotion. The author of the Homeric Hymns, who was blind, transmitted them by word of mouth through other poets. But with the invention of writing, civilization entered the age of writing, and the courtesy of the visual began to take precedence over the auditory. In the 5th century A.D., Heraclitus suggested that the eye was more accurate than the ear. Plato's “metaphor of the cave” was a direct reference to the metaphor of vision in early Western philosophy. The metaphor of light was later extended to religious teachings, and remained influential even during the Enlightenment. The English term for the Enlightenment is 'the Enlightenment', the root word of which is 'light'. In the 1880s, Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone was introduced. Then Thomas Alva Edison placed sound waves on vibrating metal needles, and the phonograph was first modeled, an important symbol of sound across time, and people finally began to “accept” hearing again[5].

As we can see from the above, both China and the West used to “honor” the sense of hearing as the sense most closely connected to the body and attached importance to the transmission of sound. After the change of civilization in the West, the role of vision was emphasized more and the sense of hearing was gradually ignored. China, on the other hand, has always valued the sense of hearing and has not let environmental and social changes affect its status. Perhaps it is the difference in the course of civilizational change between China and the West, or perhaps it is the economic patterns that determine the mutual esteem for different senses. Marx once said, “The formation of the five senses is the product of the entire history of the world in the past.” Only by looking at the simple physiological process of “hearing” as a cultural in-depth study is it possible to grasp the hidden unique value of hearing.

3. The Classification of Auditory Texts

In essence, hearing is only a sense of understanding the world, and the real study of hearing culture should start from the carrier of hearing - the text. Before it was named “hearing culture”, the study of “hearing” was mainly focused on music, film and television, and communication studies. Some of the more mature disciplines include “music aesthetics,” “film and television recording,” and “broadcasting,” among others. Based on the popular audio media available in the market, the author categorizes auditory texts into music and speech.

Music, one of the most important auditory arts for human beings, is undoubtedly a key element in the study of hearing culture. Music represents the aesthetic dimension of hearing, which can effectively shape the sense of space. Anmin Wang points out that auditory space can effectively discipline people, and different auditory spaces will produce differentiated auditory subjects [6-7]. In addition to aesthetics, music also has certain accompaniment, compared with visual images, music does not require too much attention, various activities will play “background music” to enhance the creation of the atmosphere, music radio in headphones often occupies people's fragmented time, and

there is even a special “sleep aid music”. For modern people, whose loneliness is increasing, music is gradually losing its nobility and playing a “companionship role”. When idol groups come out with new songs, fans tend to focus on the stage atmosphere, dance choreography and mv production, while the musicality is neglected. In addition, the popular music variety show also has the intention of focusing on visual effects and light on auditory enjoyment. For example, “The Voice of China” sets the show's focus on the mentor's “swivel chair”, and the evaluation of the contestants' musical level often stops at “a few turns”. Although the segmentation of music taste is conducive to the segmentation of different groups in the audio market, it also hinders the diversified dissemination of various kinds of music to a certain extent. In the digital age, the pursuit of “personalization” has become more and more intense, and the old days when a program could meet the aesthetics of most people have long gone.

Voice is the material shell of the language, the external form of language, the symbolic system that most directly records human thinking activities and is a sound with certain social significance[8-9]. Unlike the music, voice's must be emitted with the help of articulatory organs. Compared with words and other media, it has the closest connection with the brain, so its representation of human thoughts is more intuitive and less easily rewritten than other Mediums. In the period of spoken culture, the human is more like a mixture of emotions, a whole perception and a whole action.

According to John Dewey, the Voice, compared with words, emphasizes the function of carrying on the top and the bottom, that is, the context. In the communication of information, if context is not taken seriously, it will bring misunderstanding of communication. Second, speech is not only a tool for expression, but also an act. When the public reads a newspaper, they hardly care who the author of a news article is, but when using voice symbols for information dissemination, they will distinguish the users of voice symbols. Yalan Huang suggests that there are stereotypes of different gender choices in automatic voice broadcasting of news clients, and the vast majority of news clients still provide only one gender of voice when most of them provide diverse voices. And male voices are mostly used for hard news broadcasts, while female voices are more often used for entertainment news.

“Listening” connects sound and meaning, and both music and speech are externalizations of memories stored in the brain. Accordingly, ZhenzhaoNie proposed the concept of “brain text”, which he believed that the human brain solidifies fleeting sounds and forms texts with meaning. The difference lies in the way in which they are achieved. Music, however, is slightly different because it is still influenced by the tune and its meaning cannot be obtained through the symbols themselves, but must be revealed through accompanying texts such as narration and commentary. In short, auditory texts are gradually coming into people's lives, maintaining their physiological role while gradually giving rise to the “beauty of listening”.

4. The Contemporary Value of Hearing Culture

Today, human beings have entered the era of mobile Internet, and from the Internet to mobile Internet, human beings have made great leaps and faced changes in their way of living. Since the 21st century, the academic community has begun to pay renewed attention to hearing culture. In fact, the call for the return of hearing culture has been around for a long time. As early as the 1960s, McLuhan sharply criticized the audiovisual imbalance in Western culture, pointing out that the root cause was the perceptual habit of reading and writing with phonetic alphabets, and that in order to cure this “blindness in which vision is isolated,” it was necessary to establish a “visual space” that was different from the “visual space”. In order to cure this “blindness in which the visual is isolated”, it is necessary to establish the concept of “auditory space” which is different from the “visual space”. Heidegger calls for turning to the world of hearing and listening to the cry of existence. Nietzsche's

esteem for music also reflects his respect for the sense of hearing. The most persistent call for a shift from visual to hearing culture was made by Joachim-Ernst Behrendt. He expected aural culture to be the solution to all problems, from the crisis of relationships to the ecological threats to the planet. Berendt prophetically asserts that an aural age is coming: “The old form of organization was the 'visual order'; the new form will be the 'aural organism.’”

From the perspective of cultural studies, the sense of hearing as a way of viewing the world can effectively dismantle the visual hegemony. We have entered an era where visual culture is dominant and images are everywhere in our lives. We upload our selfies to our social media platforms and post our videos on short videos, not knowing that we are also the object of “gaze” and are caught in a “panoramic open-view prison”. Welsch pins his hopes of counteracting visual hegemony on hearing culture. The use of headphones privatizes the social act of listening, allowing the masses to escape the “discipline” of the real world for a while in a private auditory space, and to have an immersive, personalized experience. Paul Levinson even directly equates “cyberspace” with “listening space”.

From the perspective of the market. The rapid rise of the mobile audio industry has opened up new possibilities for the development of the media industry. The matching of mobile devices and sound has created a new sound landscape. Not everyone can adapt to the accelerated development of various visual media. Children and silver-haired people are among the groups who cannot use their eyes for a long time. The revival of hearing culture provides them with a new outlet for their media use experience by listening to mobile audio apps such as Himalaya FM, Dragonfly FM and FanDeng Reading. At the same time, the accompanying nature of sound makes it more relevant to the scene than visual text. Because vision is always associated with distance, in contrast to hearing, which often seems to be a tactile sensation without intermediaries. Therefore, the traffic information broadcast by car radio and the foreign language teaching with authentic expression are the high-quality mobile audio products nowadays[10].

5. Conclusion

The revival of hearing culture provides a new turn for the development of the Smart Media era. By tracing the origins of hearing culture, this paper divides auditory texts into two categories: music and speech, and explores the contemporary significance of hearing culture in the context of the current communication ecology. It is worth mentioning that even if we reiterate hearing culture, promoting auditory does not mean choking on it, like the metaphor of the “big-eared monster” mentioned by Nietzsche, which also falls into the misconception of “auditory supremacy. To advocate the auditory turn is not to form an opposition to the visual, let alone to deepen the weight of the auditory on the basis of the inability to shake the hegemony of the visual. We should not discuss soundscape and visualscape separately, but rather seek an organic combination of the two to promote the balance of the senses of contemporary audiences and stimulate a broader imagination of human beings.

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