The Interpersonal Meaning of Hedges

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Abstract

Hedges as a considerable fascinated language phenomena and pragmatic strategy, objectively and widely existed in every aspect of human life. Most researches on hedges focus on its communicative functions. Since the complementarity between systemic-functional linguistics and pragmatics received rare attention, this thesis attempts to find relationships between systemic-functional linguistics and pragmatics. Specifically, this thesis aims at exploring the graduation system of hedges from the perspective of appraisal system. This thesis examines the approximators under the graduation system and shields under engagement system. The analysis shows that different kinds of hedges assume different interpersonal meanings and that the interpersonal function presents rare difference in the Chinese and English courtroom discourse.

Key words: Hedges; Engagement system; Graduation system; Interpersonal meanings

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a strong complementarity between systemic-functional linguistics and pragmatics on the basis of common research area, which covers the function of language and discourse semantics (X. Zhu, 2007). This thesis attempts to find relationships between systemic-functional linguistics and pragmatics. Specifically, this thesis aims at exploring the interpersonal meaning of hedges from the perspective of appraisal system.

Appraisal is one of three major discourse semantic resources construing interpersonal meaning. (alongside involvement and negotiation). Appraisal itself is regionalised as three interacting domains-- "attitude", "engagement" and "graduation". Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things. Engagement deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. Graduation attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred. Broadly speaking engagement is concerned with the ways in which resources such as projection, modality, polarity, concession and various comment adverbials position the speaker/writer with respect to the value position being advanced and with respect to potential responses to that value position – by quoting or reporting, acknowledging a possibility, denying, countering, affirming and so on. Graduation is concerned with gradability. For attitude, since the resources are inherently gradable, graduation has to do with adjusting the degree of an evaluation – how strong or weak the feeling is.

As a linguistic means of the sub-system "engagement" and "graduation" of the appraisal system, Hedges are used by speakers to explicitly or implicitly express their "attitude" towards the said discourse, and to establish a relationship with listeners or readers, which has interpersonal meaning.

A hedge is a word or a phrase whose job it is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. Prince & Bosk (1982) proposed that hedges can be divided into approximators,

which affect the truth-conditions of the propositions put forth, and to shields, which signal the degree of commitment on the part of the speaker. One is responsible for fuzziness within the propositional content proper; the other correlates with fuzziness in the relationship between the propositional content and the speaker, ie. the speaker's attitude towards the truth condition of the proposition conveyed. Sort of and the like are approximators, which belong to truth-conditional semantics; while I think and others (such as I guess, according to somebody's opinion,etc.) are Shields, belonging to non-truth-conditional pragmatics. The approximator shows the difference or degrees of the (prototypical) proposition;

it affects the truth condition of the proposition. Approximators themselves are of two types: adaptors and rounders. The shield does not affect the truth conditions of the proposition; the only effect is the speaker's own belief or opinion. Again, shields may be plausible, as well as attributing.

The resources of engagement system and graduation system are vague expression. Through the systemic reading about appraisal system, we can find a strong correspondent relationship between hedges and engagement and graduation system. It can be seen from the following mind-map.
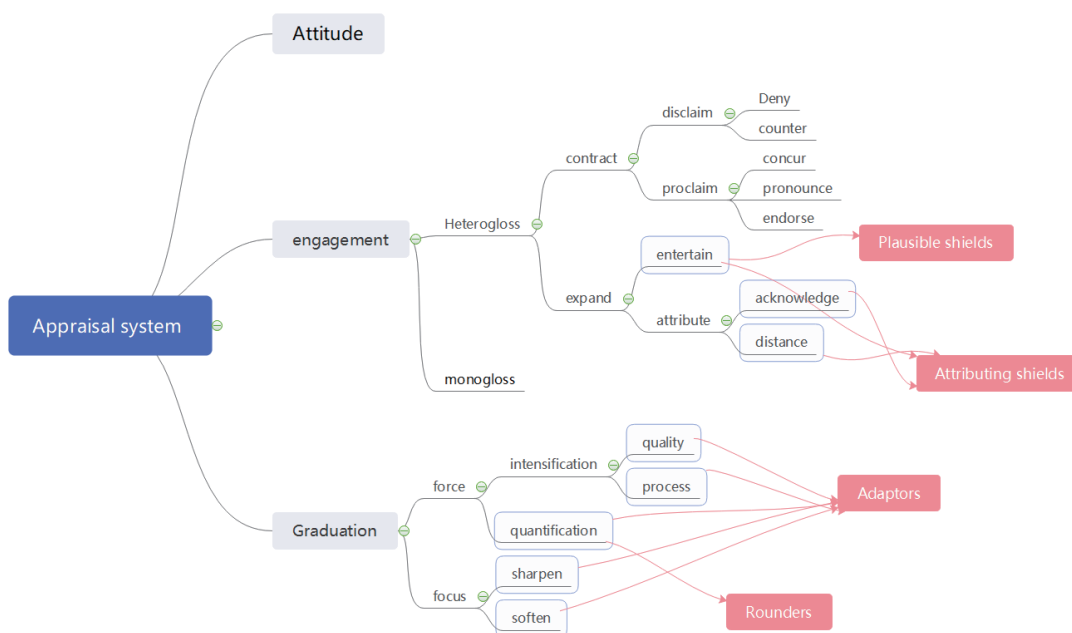

Figure 1
System network for hedges in appraisal system

Shields does not change the subject content, so they will not change the proposition true value conditions. They only convey the speaker's suspicion or reservations, or refer to the third person view, and indirectly express the speaker's attitude. Therefore, they belong to the category of pragmatics. Shields can be further divided into two types. From the theoretical framework above, we can see that shields are resources of dialogic expansion under the engagement system. Monogloss does not overtly refer to other voices or recognize alternative options. Conversely, heterogloss recognizes alternative voices. It can be divided into two broad aspects of dialogic expansion and dialogic contraction. The shields expressing subjectivity, authorial voice and the third person view are dialogically expansive. Plausible shields expressing the speaker's suspicion or reservations (I think, as far as I can tell, I believe, I suppose, I'm afraid...) entertain those dialogic alternatives. Attributing shields expressing evidence-based postulations (it seems, the research suggests, as is well

known...) can also entertain those dialogic alternatives. Attributing shields expressing the third person view (X claims, X believes...) attribute the internal authorial voice to external source.

Approximators can change the understanding of the topic according to the actual situation, thus changing the original meaning of the discourse structure. The truth condition of the topic can be changed. It may modify the original discourse to some extent according to the known situation, or set a changing scope for the original discourse, so it belongs to the semantic category. Approximators can be further divided into two types. One is adaptor that can modify the meaning of the original discourse according to the actual situation. From the theoretical framework above, we can see that adaptors are main sources of graduation. Adaptor (slightly, greatly, a little bit, to some extent, more or less...) can realize grading of intensity or amount, and adaptor (kind of, somewhat, really, almost, quite, entirely, ...) realizes

the graduation according to prototypicality and the preciousness by which category boundaries are drawn. The other is rounder (many, recent, distant, approximately, essentially, about, something around…, roughly, ...) which define a changing scope for the original discourse. It can only realize the grading of amount.

There are a certain number of hedges in the legal texts, and they play an important interpersonal function. Based on systemic-functional linguistics and from the perspective of appraisal system, this paper explores the interpersonal meaning of hedges in oral arguments, aiming to expand the discourse dimension of the study of hedges and further explore the interpersonal meaning of hedges. This paper selects Chinese and foreign courtroom discourse to explore whether there are obvious differences in the interpersonal meaning of hedges in Chinese and foreign institutionalized discourse.

This thesis consists of five sections. The first section provides a general introduction. The second section is a brief review of the previous studies. The third section introduces some key notions of appraisal system. The fourth section introduces the research method. The fifth section elaborates the interpersonal meaning of hedges by probing into concrete examples extracted from Stump case and Wang Chengzhong case. And the last section draws a conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A hedge is a word or a phrase whose job it is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. Hedges is a pragmatic notion. Some research tends to explore the contextual implications, communicative function and other pragmatic meanings. Jucker et al. (2003)we demonstrate instead that vague expressions may be more e□ective than precise ones in conveying the intended meaning of an utterance. That is, they may carry more relevant contextual implications than would a precise expression. In introducing entities into a conversation, we found that vague referring expressions often served as a focusing device, helping the addressee determine how much processing e□ort should be devoted to a given referent. In characterising events and experiences, they may indicate a closer or looser assignment of a characteristic to a conceptual category. For expressing quantities, they may convey the speaker's attitude about the quantity itself, and they may convey assumptions about the speaker's and/or the hearer's beliefs. They may be used to directly express the degree of commitment a speaker makes to a proposition, or they may convey other propositional attitudes such as newsworthiness and personal evaluation more indirectly. Finally, they may serve social functions such as engendering camaraderie and softening implicit criticisms. They may thus be seen as managing conversational implicature. Our analysis is based on a corpus of semi-controlled spoken interactions between California students, who were asked to converse on specific topics, such as movies, sports or opera. Following the categories proposed by Channell (Channell, Joanna. 1994. Vague Language. Oxford University Press, Oxford use a relevance theoretical framework of analysis to demonstrate vague expressions may be more effective than precise ones in conveying the intended meaning of an utterance. Varttala (1999) points out that hedging may take place when the precision level of exact references or numerical expressions is lowered to meet the interests of a non-specialist audience. Some focus on the hedge itself, aiming to enlarge the theory. Hosman (1989) examines the separate and combined impact of hedges, hesitations, and intensifiers on perceptions of authoritativeness, sociability, character, and similarity, and the extent to which messages containing one or more of these language variables differs from "prototypically"power1ess message in evaluative consequences. Novák (2015) demonstrated that the semantics of verbal labels cannot be identified with the semantics of evaluative expressions and developed a mathematical model of the semantics of evaluative expressions.

However, the study of hedges is within pragmatic scope. Few researchers expand the hedges into other linguistic areas. Zhang (1998) expands the hedges into other linguistic areas including semantics and syntax. He distinguished four linguistic concepts: fuzziness, vagueness, generality and ambiguity from the perspectives of semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. However, this is just a try to combine a pragmatic notion into other linguistic area. The discussion of the hedges from the theoretical perspective is far from deep. Since Y. Zhu (1996) proposed that there is a strong complementarity between systemic-functional linguistics and pragmatics on the basis of common research area, researchers attempt to find the connections between these two linguistic areas.

To bridge the gap mentioned above, this thesis attempts to find relationships between systemic-functional linguistics and pragmatics. Specifically, this paper contributes to exploring the interpersonal meaning of hedges from the perspective of appraisal system. And this study elaborates the interpersonal meaning of hedges by adopting a new evaluative theoretical framework of hedges.

3. KEY NOTIONS

In this section I will review the notions of ''dialogic expansion'' and ''Focus'' (Martin & White, 2005), from which I gained some major insights.

3.1 Dialogic Expansion

Dialogic expansion and dialogic contraction are two broad categories of heteroglossic resources according to their intersubjective functionality. The dialogic expansion

allows for dialogically alternative positions and voices, while the dialogic contraction fends off or restricts the scope of different positions and voices.

3.2 Focus

Focus can be divided into two broad categories: one is "sharpen", in which prototypicality is indicated (e.g., a real father, a true friend), the other is "soften", which characterizes an instance as having only marginal membership in the category (e.g., they sort of play jazz, they are kind of crazy, it was an apology of sorts).

4. METHOD

This paper attempts to explore the interpersonal meaning of hedges from the perspective of appraisal system. Based on the above research problems, this paper mainly adopts qualitative research methods. The interpretation of the interpersonal meaning of hedges from the perspective of appraisal system adopts qualitative research method. To achieve the reliability, in the present study, a systemic network for hedges in appraisal system was applied.

To address the research questions, the author decided to set two aims for this study. The first aim is to explore different kinds of hedges can be classified into which sub-category of the appraisal system. According to Prince's classification of hedges, hedges are divided into approximators and shields. Approximators include adaptor and rounder and shields include plausible shields and attributing shields. For this, a systemic network for hedges in appraisal system was drawn. The second aim is to explore whether the hedges used in Chinese and English courtroom discourse presents different interpersonal meanings. For this, four pairs of examples extracted from two kinds of discourse are presented in the thesis for contrastive analysis.

The corpus of this paper is selected from the oral argument of Stump case and Wang Chengzhong case. The hedges are manually selected from the corpus. The classification of the types of hedges is based on the thorough reading of the *Pragmatics*. The manual labeling is authoritative

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpersonal Meaning of Shields

The shield does not affect the truth conditions of the proposition. By affecting the speaker's own belief or opinion, the Shields make reference to other voice and viewpoints, thus "invoking or allowing for dialogistic alternatives" (Martin & White, 2005). The vagueness is open to more alternatives, which is an effective way to realize the dialogic expansion. The corresponding relationship between shields and heterogloss can be clearly seen from the following chart.

Table 1
Correspondence between shields and heterogloss

Dialogic expansion shields	Entertain	Attributing
Plausible shields	√	√
Attributing shields		√

The following discussion is based on engagement system.

5.1.1 Interpersonal Meaning of Plausible Shields

The plausible shields aim to expand the evidentiality and modality. They are important resources of entertain and attributing, the subcategory of heterogloss. We will see how plausible shields realize the dialogic expansion from the following two examples.

Example 1

Thurgood Marshall:

Could he entertain a petition of the man to have Mrs. John Dow sterilized. Mrs. John Dow being no relation at all.

George E. Fruechtenicht:

No.

Thurgood Marshall:

Why not?

George E. Fruechtenicht:

I do not think that is jurisdiction your Honor.

Thurgood Marshall:

Why not?

George E. Fruechtenicht:

Because there has to be some reason for him to be presented with the petition. He cannot simply sit back and say this morning, I think I will have simply somebody sterilized. The matter obviously must be presented to him.

(From the oral argument of Stump case)

When Judge raised a hypothetical issue that Judge Stump entertains a petition of the man to have Mrs. John Dow sterilized, the lawyer adopts two plausible shields in the answers. The lawyer uses a plausible shield to present an imagination of Stump's mental act. Here the shield explicitly declares the position as grounded in individual subjectivity. The jurisdiction lies not in the command and decision of Judge Stump but in the approval of the petition. Plausible shields expressing the speaker's suspicion or reservations entertain those dialogic alternatives. They can realize the dialogic expansion. The speaker expresses his opinion, and at the same time, acknowledges the opinion can vary according to different voices. The English courtroom discourse can present the interpersonal meaning of plausible shields in an intuitive way.

Example 2

王成忠的供述已排除，全案证据几乎都是证明王成忠无罪的证据，检察员还说证据确实充分，令人遗憾。检察员代表国家，不能乱说，本案庭审直播，全世界都在看，最高人民检察院张军检察长也可能会

看。张检很有水平，短暂任职司法部长也受到律师的高度赞扬，任职最高院时也作为专家型法官获得普遍认可。张军与姜伟、田文昌《刑事诉讼控辩审三人谈》中说过：修改后的《刑事诉讼法》将证明标准具体化三方面，但还是比较原则，需要进一步规范。检察员拿着这样的证据，还说证据确实充分，我相信张军检察长不会认可。

Wang's confession has been ruled out, and almost all of the evidence in the case can prove Wang's innocence. Prosecutors also said the evidence was truly sufficient. It's really regrettable. On behalf of the state, the prosecutor can't talk nonsense. The whole world is watching the trial live, and Procurator-General Zhang Jun of the Supreme People's Procuratorate may also watch it. Zhang is very competent. His brief tenure as attorney General was highly praised by lawyers, and he was generally recognized as an expert judge when he served on the Supreme Court. Zhang Jun, Jiang Wei and Tian Wenchang said in their *Discussion on The Defense and Trial of Criminal Prosecution* that the revised *Criminal Procedure Law* concretized the standards of proof in three aspects, but it was still a comparative principle and needed to be further standardized. Prosecutors with such evidence, also said that the evidence is really sufficient. I believe zhang Jun prosecutor will not approve.

(From the oral argument of Wang case)

The speculation that Chief Prosecutor Zhang will watch the court trial is consistent with the use of plausible shield hereafter. The plausible shields present the subjectivity of the speculation. Xu's belief that Chief Prosecutor Zhang will be disapproval of the evidences against Judge Wang is actually too subjective attitude. The plausible shield *I believe* expresses the speaker's reservations of the proposition, which entertains those dialogic alternatives. It realizes the dialogic expansion. The plausible shield in the Chinese courtroom discourse can also realize the dialogistic expansion and express the speaker's own attitude.

The plausible shields used in the Chinese and English legal discourse both express subjective attitude and at the same time ensure the dialogic alternative. And they can successfully realize the dialogic expansion. In this way, the plausible shields become important resources of engagement system. In exploring the relationship between the hedges and appraisal system, we have found the interpersonal meaning of hedges.

5.1.2 Interpersonal Meaning of Attributing Shields

The attributing shields realize the dialogistic expansion through the "externalized proposition". (Martin, 2005) Attributing shields expressing the third person view (X claims, X believes...) attribute the internal authorial voice to external source. It can be seen from the following two examples.

Example 3

George E. Fruechtenicht：

I must suggest that in every case where a mother decides to sue her husband and where there are children, those children automatically through the mother come under the EGS of the Court and he makes dispositions of those children's future interests which are extremely important to that child.

To suggest, as I think maybe the logical inference of this suggestion that Guardian ad litem are to be appointed to suggest that each case where a child is the subject a matter having to do with visitation and custody and its future religious practices in a divorce action.

That that child, each individual child is entitled to a Guardian ad Litem and presumably an attorney would boggle the entire system.

Courts customarily assumed jurisdiction over the children under those circumstances.

(From the oral argument of Stump case)

Here lawyer illustrates jurisdiction by an example. He uses an attributive shield to present the Court's attitude towards the jurisdiction over the child under the divorced circumstances. There forms a contrast between the jurisdiction of the Stump case and the divorce case. The attributing shields can realize "an explicit distancing of the authorial voice from the attributed material" (Martin & White, 2005). Here the lawyer criticizes the Court's different attitudes towards the judicial immunity over similar issues. By the use of the attributing shields, the lawyer realizes the dialogistic expansion. The dialogistic expansion of attributing shields is realized by attributing the speaker's attitude to the external voice. The English courtroom discourse can present the interpersonal meaning of attributing shields in an intuitive way.

Example 4

王涛证言："其实我对这样的事情一直是很反感的，我在法院工作这么多年，审理经济案件30年，最烦的就是有人干预司法公正，所以我对王成忠的话并没有往心里去……我认为王成忠对这起案件认定的比较清楚，适用的法律正确，所以同意王成忠的意见。"王涛如此明确的证言，何来受到王成忠的暗示而照顾？

"In fact, I have always been disgusted with such things," Wang testified. "I have been working in the court for many years, and I have been trying economic cases for 30 years. What annoys me most is that someone interferes with judicial justice. I think Wang Chengzhong has a clear understanding of this case and the applicable law is correct, so I agree with wang's opinion." Why was Wang Tao's explicit testimony taken care of by Wang Chengzhong's suggestion?

(From the oral argument of Wang case)

In the example extracted from the oral argument of Wang case, Xu used two attributing shields continuously. Here Wang Tao testified that Judge Wang did not interfere with justice. Xu here uses Wang Tao's testimony to prove the innocence of Judge Wang. The attitudinal meaning

is attributed to Wang Tao by the use of the attributing shields. And this attribution successfully avoids the subjectivity of the lawyer's argument. The attributing shields Wang Tao testified and Wang Tao's explicit testimony enable a space where the speaker and others can conduct dialog. This kind of hedges as heterogloss realizes the dialogic expansion.

The attributing shields used in Chinese and English legal discourse both express objective attitude. And the objectivity is realized by the attribution of the attitudinal meaning from the speaker himself to others. The attributing shields provide the resources of dialog, thus realizing the dialogic expansion.

The shields in Chinese and English display similar interpersonal meaning. They are essential resources of heterogloss. Voices from oneself or others ensure the dialogic diversity and intensify the attitudinal meaning.

5.2 Interpersonal Meaning of Approximators

Compared with shields, the approximators affect the truth conditions of the proposition, for it shows the degrees of the proposition. By scaling the speaker's intensity and their investment, the approximator adjusts the attitudinal meanings. "Gradability is a defining property of all attitudinal meanings." (Martin, 2005) The approximators are the main resources of graduation system. Adaptors are resources of force and focus, while rounders are resources of force under the graduation system. And the relationship between approximators and graduation system can be clearly seen in the following chart.

Table 2
Correspondence between approximators and graduation

Graduation approximators	Force	Focus
Adaptor	Intensification, quantification	Sharpen, soften
Rounder	Quantification	

The following discussion is based on graduation system.

5.2.1 Interpersonal Meaning of Adaptor

Adaptors as resources of force can realize grading of intensity or amount, and adaptor as resources of focus can realize the graduation according to prototypicality and the preciousness by which category boundaries are drawn. Adaptors such as slightly, probably can intensify the attitude in an up-scaling or down-scaling way, while adaptors such as somewhat, really can soften or sharpen the attitude of the speaker. The following examples will show how different adaptors can realize different interpersonal functions.

Example 5

Let me give you one other case that has been turning over in my mind. Supposing the allegation in the petition instead of being that she was retarded and promiscuous, had rather been that she was infected with a malignant cancer and that a medical judgment of the doctor was that, it should be removed by this procedure and then the Judge did exactly what he did here and acting in all good faith, do you think he was right, he did not appoint a guardian, he did not file a paper in the court or he did not do anything else but later on it turns out they were wrong.

Would he be liable?

Richard H. Finley：

I would say your Honor that it would probably have been technically not a judicial act and probably technically under my theory there could, if one could show damages be a cause of action --Yes, sir.

(From the oral argument of Stump case)

Finley is the lawyer of the plaintiff. Facing the question of the Judge, Finley adopts the same adaptor twice to emphasize that Stump's act is not a judicial one. The adaptor here is a resource for the intensification. Adaptors such as probably, slightly are assessment of intensity of the quality. Probably represents the up-scaling quality and slightly represents the down-scaling quality. It performs the function of up-scaling. "Probably" realizes the infusion of the up-scaling meaning into the semantics.

Example 6

王成忠的供述已排除，全案证据几乎都是证明王成忠无罪的证据，检察员还说证据确实充分，令人遗憾。

Wang's confession has been ruled out, and almost all of the evidence in the case can prove Wang's innocence. Prosecutors also said the evidence was truly sufficient. It's really regrettable.

(From the oral argument of Wang case)

"Almost" is resource of force, which can realize grading of intensity. Xu here used the adaptor "almost" to emphasize that the evidences of the whole cases can prove the innocence of Judge Wang. "Almost" presents the same up-scaling function as the adaptor "probably" in the Stump case. Xu escalates the credibility of the guiltless testimony and evidences by intensifying the force. Adaptors like somewhat can also realize the intensification by isolating and downgrading the semantic meanings.

The two examples above demonstrate that both Chinese and English users are accustomed to using adaptors to show aggressive attitude by either intensifying or sharpening and softening the attitudinal meanings.

5.2.2 Interpersonal Meaning of Rounder

The rounders are the measurement of the quantity rather than the quality. They are the main resources of the graduation system. The rounders that realize the measurement of size, amount, vigor can belong to "force", subcategory of graduation system. The following examples will show how different rounders can realize its interpersonal meanings.

Example7

Richard H. Finley：

Mr. Fruechtenicht began at the very beginning

explaining that Judge Stump is an experienced Judge. He had been there a heck of a long time and he had been.

Thurgood Marshall：

There are many of experienced Judges who have made mistakes.

Richard H. Finley：

Your Honor, if this were a simple mistake after he had assumed jurisdiction or if there had been arguably subject matter personal jurisdiction.

(From the oral argument of Stump case)

The Judge here uses rounder to assess the degree of amount. "Many of" indicates that the number of judges who once made mistakes is large enough to cover Judge Stump. Quantification is also one way to show force and convey attitudinal meaning. "Many" here is "analogous with infusing formulation under intensification" (Martin & White, 2005). It realizes a semantic enlargement.

Example 8

检察员多次说王成忠故意违背事实和法律，辩护人依最高院刑诉司法解释第218条两次依法质问检察员，要求明确指出王成忠究竟违反了哪一条法律，但检察员均不回应。为什么不回应？只能理解为无法回应，检察员没有任何证据证明王成忠违反了法律。

The procurator said for many times that Wang Chengzhong deliberately violated facts and laws. The defender questioned the procurator twice according to article 218 of the Judicial interpretation of the Supreme People's Court, asking him to specify which law Wang Chengzhong had violated, but the procurator did not respond. Why not respond? The prosecutors had no evidence that Wang had broken the law.

(From the oral argument of Wang case)

Here Xu adopts the same rounder as that of the Stump case. "Duo ci" gives an assessment of the quantity. Xu here criticizes the fact-finder of his remarks that Judge Wang violates the facts and law. The contrast with "Duo ci" and "Jun bu hui ying" suggests that the fact-finder made false judgement. The rounder amplifies the semantic meaning.

Rounders like "recent, distant" can also give assessment of the time and space. These rounders become momentous resources of force by the graduability of quantification. They also entail attitudinal meanings. The two examples above that the rounders used by both Chinese and English users can fulfill the graduability and contain attitudinal meaning.

6. FINDINGS

The pragmatics and systemic-functional linguistics finally find its relation in our discussion about the interpersonal meaning of hedges. Words for communicative purposes also assume interpersonal function. Specifically, the interpersonal meaning of hedges can be described as follows. According to the classification of Prince et. Al.,

hedges can be divided into approximators and shields. The shields are important resources of engagement resources and approximators are main resources of graduation system. Hedges can explicitly or implicitly convey the attitudinal meaning.

Approximators are main resources of graduation system. Approximators can modify the original discourse to some extent according to the known situation, or set a changing scope for the original discourse. Approximators can be further divided into two types: adaptor and rounder. Adaptors can express attitudinal meaning by either grading the intensity or amount of the proposition or grading prototypicality and the preciousness. Rounders convey attitudinal meaning by grading amount, size and time.

Shields are main resources of engagement system. Shields mainly realize the dialogic expansion under heterogloss of engagement system. Shields express subjectivity, authorial voice and the third person view, which recognizes the dialogical multiformity. Shields can be further divided into two types: plausible shields and attributing shields. Plausible shields entertain those dialogic alternatives by expressing the speaker's suspicion or reservations. Attributing shields entertain those dialogic alternatives by expressing evidence-based postulations. Attributing shields attribute the internal authorial voice to external source by expressing the third person view.

Through the contrast of hedges used in the Chinese and English courtroom discourse, we can draw the conclusion that the interpersonal meaning of hedges presents rare difference between Chinese and English. Hedges can find corresponding words in both Chinese and English.

This thesis presents a new theoretical perspective of hedges and connects the pragmatics with a new evaluative system-- appraisal system. By exploring the evaluative meanings of hedges, we can see how a linguistic phenomenon realizes its interpersonal function. However, there still exists some problems. Firstly, the classification of hedges by Prince deserves deeper exploration. This thesis just talks about four sub-categories of hedges and has no semantic analysis of the hedges themselves. Secondly, this thesis pays less attention to how the relationship between the hedges and engagement system and graduation system affects the attitude system. Lastly, the extracted examples are too small to cover all types of hedges. These problems need further discussion in the future research.

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