

Research of College English Newspaper Reading Teaching Based on the Theory of Implicit Evaluation

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Abstract

Traditional teaching of the English Newspaper reading courses emphasizes the transmission of knowledge and culture, and pays too much attention to the analysis of discourse structures, but ignore the interpretation of the ideology and viewpoints implied in the newspaper discourse. Through the analysis of language resources in *China Daily* and the *Wall Street Journal*, we find that there are a lot of implicit evaluation resources in newspapers and periodicals, which indirectly convey the attitudes and opinions of newspaper reporters. Therefore, exploring the implicit evaluation resources in the newspapers in the teaching process is of great significance to cultivate students' critical thinking ability and promote the teaching of optional reading courses of English newspapers.

Key words: College English newspaper reading; Implicit evaluation; Lexical metaphor; Ideational meaning; Graduation

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1. INTRODUCTION

The course of English newspaper reading is a compulsory course for College students majoring in English, while many schools also set up this optional course for students not majoring in English. Through reading various English newspapers and magazines, students can understand and gain the political, economic and cultural knowledge of various countries in the world. At the same time, it also

plays a very important role in expanding the cultural vision of college students, cultivating the sense in language use and improving the efficiency of English language learning. However, the traditional classroom teaching focuses on the study of geographical information and local conditions in western countries, as well as foreign people's daily practices, mostly on the analysis of discourse structure, ignoring the exploration of the attitudes and stances of the writers and the media. News reports seem to possess the characteristics of objectivity and authenticity, but they often express the positions and stances which are seemingly neutral but implicitly implanted in the language resources. These language resources reflect some implicit attitudes of text writers, so it is of great significance to explore and discuss these evaluation resources in the newspapers reading teaching for cultivating students' abilities of critical thinking and reading.

The appraisal system theory, concerned with the evaluation of language(also called the evaluation theory), "focuses on and explores the attitudes and emotions in the text to achieve the aim of its alliance with the corresponding reader" (Martin & Rose, 2003). In recent years, the researches of evaluation in the news discourse have gained the fruitful and significant findings. Those researches can be explored into: critical reading strategy study, social cognitive model and intertextual analysis and critical discourse analysis. In general, although scholars have obtained satisfactory and significant findings in the study of implicit evaluation of news discourse, these findings are mainly concerned with the exploration of explicit evaluation resources, and the research on the implicit attitudes, which are induced by ideational meaning, is still weak and has a long way to go. Attitude, engagement, and graduation are important ingredients of Martin's appraisal system theory. They are the disintegrated parts of the entire system. Therefore, this paper intends to analyze the implicit attitudinal resources from the perspective of teaching of college newspaper reading, and explore the function of implicit attitude

resource in positioning readers to achieve consistency between subjects.

2. IMPLICIT EVALUATION BASED ON THE INTERPERSONAL FUNCTION

Systemic-functional linguistics holds that language has three meta-functions: ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. Interpersonal function is derived from the feature of the social sign of language. Language, as a symbol, is a tool for its users to employ language strategies to express people's stance and judgment as well as the evaluation of the events occurring around them. Martin thinks that the interpersonal function theory of systemic functional linguistics is not perfect enough to fully reflect the characteristics of human communication, so he puts forward the Appraisal System theory. The theory focuses on «the various attitudes negotiated, the intensity of the emotions involved, and the various ways in which values are expressed and readers are allied (Martin & Rose, 2003, p.22). «Evaluation can be summarized into three major systems: attitude, engagement and graduation. The three systems can be divided into multiple subsystems. Evaluation can also be divided into explicit evaluation and implicit evaluation according to the degree of attitude and emotion. Explicit evaluation is expressed through words that clearly indicate the author's attitude such as being happy, angry and painful. Implicit evaluation is expressed through non-core words or semantic structures that have no obviously presented attitude. Newspaper discourse is generally considered to report the events of the human world through objective, impartial or descriptive language, while, different from other texts, newspaper discourse usually uses obscure or selective skills to reflect the ideology and viewpoints of the reporters. Overseas and Chinese scholars have made some important explorations and practices in the research of English newspapers teaching by using evaluation theory, and some achievements have also risen to the high. However, most of these studies focus on explicit evaluation, and there is little discussion on implicit evaluation. Wang Tianhua pointed out that the semiotic resources in the language are often employed to construct the orderly discourse, convey attitude and position readers with implicit evaluation language resources (Wang, 2012, p.43). Therefore, it is of great significance to analyze and explore these implicit evaluation resources for researchers to identify and interpret the attitudes behind the media.

3. EMBODIMENT OF IMPLICIT EVALUATION IN ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

Explicit evaluation is usually represented by words with clearly attitudinal meaning, so the attitude and ideological

reflections expressed by reporters and media are easy to be identified by the readers. However, implicit evaluation is represented by non-core words and semantic structures with no obviously attitudinal meaning, so it is difficult to be perceived by readers (Martin & White, 2005). Martin & White pointed out that implicit evaluation in discourse can be represented in three approaches: the lexical metaphor provokes the evaluation; the ideational meaning affords the evaluation; and the resources of graduation flag the evaluation. Later, (Hood & Martin, 2007, p.753) Hood & Martin also believed that implicit evaluation is mainly reflected by the selection of ideational meaning and the classification of words with varying semantic degree in ideational meaning. Instant news reports often capture the interest of persons to report the events with the vivid language. In this following research, we usually use The English version of *China Daily* and the *Wall Street Journal* as teaching materials in addition to the text book in the course. The reason why these two types of newspapers are selected is because of their great social influence. *China Daily* is the English newspaper with the largest circulation in China, reflecting the views and attitudes of domestic media towards world events. The *Wall Street Journal* is a political and economic newspaper with a large circulation in the United States and its influence in the world is second to none. Based on these two kinds of newspapers, this research paper identifies and discusses the implicit evaluation resources in English newspapers and periodicals in order to dig out the attitudes and opinions of newspapers and media and cultivate students' critical reading ability.

3.1 The Lexical Metaphor Provokes the Evaluation

Lexical metaphor is a kind of linguistic phenomenon with the feature of analogy. Provoking the evaluation by lexical metaphor means eliciting the reader's cognitive attitude through the comparison between different conceptual fields in the text. The metaphorical language with analogical feature strengthens the emotional resonance of readers. The employment of lexical metaphor in the following example indicates the implicit evaluation :

(1) We were purchased **as a supermarket**. We were gathered in white and grey clothes, and they would come over and select you out **as you was chosen for sale**.....I reflect all we kids being **gathered up, as a herd of cattle**.... (Martin & White, 2005, p.64)

(2) This story's right, this story's true
I would not tell lies to you
Like the promises they did not keep
And how they fenced us in like sheep
Said to us come take our hand
Sent us off to mission land
Taught us to read, to write and pray
Then they took the children away... (Martin & White, 2005, p.65)

The use of lexical metaphor appears in the above

two passages. In example (1), the linguistic description in the passage does not indicate the impersonal behavior of the government, but what the authorities performed is equivalent to «treat the original residents as commodities», especially by the use of three parallelism -- as a supermarket, like you were for sale, like a mob of cattle -- apparently arouses the indifference of the government to the original residents in the readers' mind. Example (2) is a song that reflects the real life of Australia's «*Stolen Generation*». The «*Stolen Generation*» is a group experiencing tragedies in Australian history. At that time, the Australian government, under the pretext of improving the lives of aboriginal children, forcibly took the mixed-race aboriginal children away from their families and sent them to the nurseries and other places to receive cultural education. «*And how they fenced us in like sheep*» expresses the «*Stolen Generation*»'s opposition to the barbaric policies of the government because of the psychological trauma inflicted on them by the government, and these trauma cannot be healed.

The same examples of lexical metaphors also exist in *China Daily* and *The Wall Street Journal* :

(3) when it comes to the US secretary of state Henry Kissinger's statement, what he proposed is similar to act as a **bridge** between the two sides instead of anyone's **chess piece**. (*China Daily*).

(4) With regard to the financial situation, the banking system is **Greece's Achilles' hell**. Banks in Greece have lost more than 16 percent of the entire deposits since December, with outflows of €24 billion in two months of that year. (*The Wall Street Journal*).

In example (3), former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger compared the development of Sino-US relations to building a «bridge», rather than playing separate «chess pieces». Here is a metaphorical expression in language use. Although there is no clearly attitudinal word, the use of metaphors about *bridge and chess piece* shows readers the importance of Sino-US relations. *Greece's Achilles' hell* in example (4) is also a metaphor employed in the sentence. The author compares the Greek banking system to the «*Achilles heel*», indicating that the banking system is the weakness of the Greek economy and expressing concern about the domestic economic situation of Greece.

3.2 The Ideational Meaning Affords the Evaluation

Ideational function is a subsystem of the three language meta-functions in systemic functional linguistics: ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. It is the description of the speaker's experience of the surrounding external world and human inner world. The ideational meaning affords the evaluation, which means that the different selection of semantic components in a text implies the author's attitude and viewpoint (White, 2004). White pointed out that evocation and provocation are the most important methods to cause implicit evaluation in news articles. Provocation is mainly

to arouse positive or negative emotional responses of readers or listeners through purely conceptual meaning in a discourse.

For example, Let's look at the following report about the Ukraine crisis in *China Daily*.

(5) Together with the closer political relations, the European Commission has agreed to spend approximately 500 million euros in trade benefits to Ukraine, cutting customs obligations on a wide range of agricultural goods, textiles and other imports. (*China Daily*).

In Example (5), there are no words with obviously attitudinal meaning, but the conceptual meaning of the sentence can arouse readers' negative emotional response. The crisis has led to a sharp deterioration in Ukraine's economic and social development, and the EU had to offer Ukraine 500 million euros in terms of the preferential policy to cut tariffs on agricultural products, textiles and other imported goods in order to protect its crumbling domestic regime. The arousing emotional response mainly comes from readers' value orientation and judgment of the current social and cultural situation.

(6) France makes great contribution to the GDP of eurozone, nearly 21% of that, and Italy follows France, more than 15% of the entire eurozone GDP. Together, these two great economies contribute over 23 times Greece's part of eurozone GDP. (*The Wall Street Journal*).

In the above example (6), the author quotes the specific historical event to convey the fact that France and Italy account for about 37% of the eurozone economy and contribute much more to the eurozone gross domestic product than Greece, 23 times that of Greece. So the reader can't help realizing that while The Greek debt crisis is haunting Europe, the economic performance of France and Italy is also vital to the stability of the EU.

3.3 The Resources of Graduation Flag the Evaluation

Graduation is a common linguistic phenomenon, which quantifies things, qualities and behaviors to express the attitudinal meaning with the varying degree. The semantic graduation resources play a key role in the evaluation system, which can not only express the conceptual meaning, but also have interpersonal functions such as emphasizing, mitigating and blurring the emotions. The fact the graduation resources indicate evaluation means that speakers use graduation resources as signals to indicate the existence of attitudinal meaning to readers. Force and Focus are two sub-categories of graduation. The former involves quality, intensity of process and quantity of entity, which are called intensification and quantification respectively. Within the theoretical framework of systemic functional grammar, the quantification and intensification representation in the language resource is a disjunctive relationship in terms of the semantic selection. Intensification is about the appraisal of quality and process of the events, usually

represented by adverbs, which is to modify adjectives, adverbs, and process verbs. Quantification concerns the semantic appraisal of the quantity, volume and extent of a physical entity. To be exact, Extent is further categorized into temporal and spatial poles of proximity and distribution. Both force and focus are discussed in terms of two poles of rising and falling, according to the d of the semantic value. Focus concerns whether the object evaluated is a core member or a marginal member of the category. According to the degree of semantic atitudinal values, the focus can be confined to sharpening and softening poles. Force and focus can be divided into upward and downward axes according to semantic value. Up-scale semantic intensity highlights the content emphasized by the author and gives positive pole of evaluation; Down-scale semantic intensity weakens the content discussed and offers negative pole of evaluation.

Let's see the following two examples:

(7) UN Secretary-Ban Ki-moon is visiting Moscow **on Tuesday** [quantitative: extent] and is to drop into **to Ukraine** [quantitative: extent] **on Saturday** [quantitative: extent]. His subsequent visit will come together with the tense scenes at the UN Security Council **in New York** [quantification: extent]. It was **the UN council's seventh meeting** [quantification: quantity] **in less than four weeks** [quantification: extent] on Ukraine. (*China Daily*).

(8) Crimean voted **overwhelmingly** [enhancement: process] on Monday to break away from Ukraine and strive to join Russia. The **hastily** [enhancement: process] called vote was held **three weeks** [quantification: span] after Russian patriotic troops had headed for the Black Sea Peninsula. (*China Daily*).

The distribution of the word of *seventh* quantity and the extent of the phrase *in less than four weeks* with the decreasing semantic strength in (7), indicates that the United Nations has made no substantial progress in the resolution of Ukrainian crisis, highlights the deep gap between the US and the European countries, and carries a metaphorical meaning in the negative judgment about this issue. In this case, both the time extent *on Tuesday and on Saturday* and the spatial extent *to Ukraine and at the UN Security Council in New York* represent the UN Secretary-General's attempts to deal with the Ukrainian crisis and the Russian-Uzbek territorial conflict. So from the above language resource, the crisis is proven complex and difficult. The words of *overwhelmingly* and *hastily* in example (8) are expressions of intensified semantic meaning, reflecting the Crimean people's strong desire to get rid of Ukrainian rule and join Russia. Similarly in this sentence *three weeks* is a quantifier of time extent, implying the author's positive judgment of South Ukrainian entry into Russia.

Let's look at the reports about Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

(9) In terms of the report of the official Xinhua News Agency, **by March 30** [quantification: extent], **46**

economies [quantification: number] had submitted to be founding members, of which **31** [quantification: number] had already been not disapproved and others were yet waiting for approval, inclusive of Australia. (*The Wall Street Journal*).

By March 31, the countries around the world are eager to participate in the AIIB to promote their own economic development. At the same time, it also suggests a positive judgment on the actions taken by China to set up the AIIB.

(10) The demand for cocoa product in Asia **virtually** [intensification: process] paused and the market in Asia **fundamentally** [intensification: process] closed down. The **soft** [focus: softening] demand in Asia rises amid dropping cocoa consumption in North America and Europe. (*The Wall Street Journal*).

As the market for cocoa products in Asia collapsed, all economic activities were stopped and all markets were shut down, what matters is the sluggish recovery of the world economy. In the above example, the word *soft* is a softening-focus one, which often shows a negative attitude in the discourse and also expresses worries about the Asian economy.

4. CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the two kinds of newspapers, we believe that the theory of implicit evaluation is a powerful tool to explore and dig out the subjective attitudes and opinions of news reporters. In the study of optional course of Reading of English Newspapers, through the exploration and analysis of implicit evaluation resources, students can understand the core idea of news discourse, identify and interpret the hidden meaning between the lines, and identify the position and ideology behind the newspapers and media. This is of positive guiding significance to the realization of teaching objectives, the acquisition of good teaching effects, and the exploration of a set of practical and effective teaching methods.

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