



Information Construction of News Discourse Under the Perspective of Intertextuality

YAN Jiansheng^{[a],*}

^[a]Associate Professor, School of Foreign Language, Hezhou University, Hezhou, China.

*Corresponding author.

Supported by Undergraduate Teaching Reform Project of Guangxi Higher Education in 2016 (2016JGB385).

Received 27 October 2016; accepted 15 December 2016
 Published online 26 January 2017

Abstract

Intertextuality refers to the relationship of mutual penetration among texts, no text stands alone but is interlinked with the tradition that came before it and the context in which it is produced. As a genre of media report that conveys information, news discourse is characterized by its documentary, novelty, timeliness, and universality. Some news discourses reveal penetrability with others, causing intertextuality and providing a wider space to interpret them. Meanwhile, intertextuality also makes the narrative space optimization and discourse information complex or polysemy. Therefore, an accurate understanding of a piece of news depends on not only the coherence within a single text, but mutual interpretation among similar discourses. The distribution of news discourse information abides by tree structure, sometimes news understanding is related to human's cognitive activities.

Key words: News; Intertextuality; Discourse information; Tree structure

Yan, J. S. (2017). Information Construction of News Discourse Under the Perspective of Intertextuality. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 14(1), 18-21. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/9194>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/9194>

INTRODUCTION

As a narrative text of polyphonic multi-tone, news narration on one hand manifests its linguistic conceptual

work under communicative context in accordance with a certain purpose (Yan, 2013, pp.21-22); on the other hand, it has relatively fixed time sequence and spatial narrative structure. Although in a piece of news, personal narration is seldom adopted as in fictions, six facts of Who, When, Where, What, Why and Result are obviously included. Each piece of news actually delivers specific discourse information, while confined by ideology, language environment and different viewing angles, a same event in one period may be reported in different ways, or different events in different periods appear similar reports, multiple interweaving utterance forms intertextuality. The existence of intertextuality leads to subtle changes to news discourse information, though the paradigm generally complies with the principle from totality to part. Therefore, analysis and understanding news discourses usually involve diachronic information and synchronic information in different news from cognitive view; even associated news information in different periods needs to be considered.

1. THEORETICAL SOURCE REVIEW OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Intertextuality or textual interaction usually concerns two or more texts that they can refer to one another. This term is from the 1960s literary criticism theory, and was first used by Julia Kristeva, a French semiologist, who found when reading Bakhtin's works that there existed one or more previous texts before an author finished his own work, and these previous texts provided reading experience for him to construct his own "department", his task was only to participate to establish the whole "mansion". That is to say, any new text's birth is the continuation of the previous texts; a text cannot be independent from other texts, as is what Roland Barthes called "the death of author", whereas the interpreting task of a text is left to the reader. Only when the reader has understood the meaning with the

help of his or her previous reading experience can the text value be discovered. Obviously, as soon as the term of intertextuality was put forward, it has become a landmark of post-structuralism. However, it must be pointed out that intertextuality concerns two basic categories, one is manifesto intertextuality, which embodies in the relevance between a certain text and other discourses' surface features through quotation, allusion, parody, blending, cliché and so on; The other is constituent intertextuality, which means that one text gives invasive effects to other texts through memory, repetition and amendment,

found in expression in the genre, paradigm, topic and type that occur mutual relationship in the past or present reading texts. Among them, there exist imitating and borrowing relations, concerning the combination of discourse specification. Studying constituent intertextuality helps guide readers to change their intertextuality study from the surface phenomenon of texts to the deep social and cultural reasons as well as the writing motivation. (Luo, 2014, pp.92-96)

There is no doubt that intertextuality provides perspectives for text interpretation. Post-structuralist Derrida drew a famous conclusion that language symbols were a series of different delaying games by analyzing multiplicity of text meaning from linguistics angle. According to Derrida's view, deconstruction is not merely reverse the intrinsic binary opposition of logos such as parole/character, nature/culture, man/woman, soul/flesh, consciousness/unconsciousness, its fundamental problem is that there is no rank order on which is superior and which is inferior but some differences in the binary opposition in which much inclusion and interinfiltration exist. Therefore, the premise that a text distinguishes other texts lies in the substitution of word paradigmatic relations, not creating new aggregation rules. So even with a same text, different conclusions may be drawn under different viewing angles; textual meaning is always characterized by difference and openness. What's more, some texts are so interfered by social activities that they evolve into parts of social and political discourses, much effort must be made when the readers try to interpret them, as Viktor Shklovsky points out "art skills are to make objects and forms unfamiliarity to increase perceptual difficulty because the feeling process itself is an aesthetic one that must manage to prolong." (Liu, 2016) Thus, we must pay more effort to understand news discourses when they seem easy in its appearance; the more complicated they are, the more value they have.

2. INTERTEXTUALITY ANALYSIS OF NEWS DISCOURSE NARRATION

2.1 Two Common Intertextuality Paradigms in News Discourse

News intertextuality first embodies in its manifesto intertextuality. That is to say, a certain news report may

cause the audience to recall and compare with other relevant events having similarity or portability. For example, historical events may dramatically repeat, Edward Snowden's WikiLeaks leads people to recalling the Watergate Affair in 1972; Gaddafi's destiny is similar to Saddam's ending; the standoff on the Black Sea in 2014 between the two superpowers reminds us the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and so on. It is remarkable that after Watergate Affair, there appears a suffix of -gate in English, which is equivalent to "[-]" in Chinese. Today, whenever state leaders encounter power crisis or scandals, this suffix is bound to be employed. Henceforth, -gate is used to those explosive incidents and inside news unable to confirm its truth under different opinions. In fact, "-gate not only indicates some political scandals, but it is commonly employed in the breaking news of other industries like entertainment, spots and personal life." (2014) Such intertextuality ways may concern not only news information within the context but out of it, hence some media compared Rodman's visit to North Korea in January 2014 to Sino-American Ping-pong Diplomacy in April 1971, and from Ukrainian referendum in March 2014 to Estonian referendum in 1941, even Mongolian referendum for independence in 1945 and Republic of Tuva's referendum for incorporating into the Soviet Union in 1944. Therefore, "interpretation of some news must be established on mutual attention of the whole discourse and even other relevant texts. Meanwhile, the intertextuality ways of realizing discourse coherence make the news information more accuracy and concise in expression, more influence and emotional appeal are shown (Sun, 2010, pp.62-66).

Then news intertextuality manifests its constituent intertextuality. As news discourse doesn't need to create novelty and gaudy words but to express a real intention by combining plain dictions and spot scenes, news writing follows a certain paradigm, which embodies in time series and spatial structures. If the time series prescribe a limit to news instantaneity, then the spatial structures add ductility to it, which give news discourse narration more independence. Thus, media publishers have more choices to cover their events; they can choose different ways to deliver a same incident or use similar ways to deliver different incidents, among which quotation, recombination, refutation and parody are used under the premise of not breaking away from the topical subjects of them, whether they are real and unreal, explicit and vague, simple and complex. This is called polyphony multi-voice. Modern communication also points out that simulacrum are a large number of graphics, images and symbols without any objective source and signified things through mass duplication but extreme true in the post-modern society. According to linguistics, signifier and signified are two sides in one part of verbal sign, which are inseparable. Therefore, multiple pieces of information

may be produced before a piece of news is interpreted. For example, concerning the incident reports of MH370 in 2014, many guesses appear at first. *North Korea daily* reported on March 10th that MH370 missed and suspicion of terrorist attack hangs over, they quoted news from Associated Press that using counterfeit passport is a usual trick of international terrorist organization such as ISIS. Hong Kong's *Wenhui Net* reported that it was possible that the plane broke up by an uncontrolled speed because of the thunderstorm weather. British *Daily Mail* reported on March 19th that new investigation showed Captain Harry should be responsible for this accident, he had suffered a mental disorder and the passengers had been dead several hours because of oxygen deficit before the airline crashed. British *The Times* reported that FBI doubted it was the terrorists that bombed the plane. Later, it was said that the Hacker had stolen the confidential data of MH370, etc.. It can be imagined that before the truth is revealed, many similar reports may come out, and they jointly make up the whole discourse information chain of MH370 incident.

2.2 Construction Analysis of News Discourse Under Intertextuality

The main function of news is to transmit information, and information is originally a term of information theory, which studies the measurement, transition and conversion rules of information by means of mathematical statistic method. Information theory in the narrow sense mainly studies information processing and information transfer while in broad sense it includes not only the former but all fields related to information such as philosophy, psychology, communication and linguistics, etc.. The information structure of news discourse refers to the relationship among information presentation, information fundamental units, each unit in a discourse and mechanism that units depend on integration to form the whole discourse information. Under normal conditions, there is one and only one kernel proposition called centre matter (core information) in each piece of news. The kernel proposition can be dominant, which is directly revealed through the discourse title or a certain proposition in it; the kernel proposition can be also recessive in which the proposition reflecting the discourse theme cannot be found directly, then, it needs to be inducted and summarized by readers or discourse analysts. However, the existence of intertextuality may change the tree structure information distribution of a piece of news, which makes the discourse information complicated and narrative means enriched. This phenomenon can be illustrated by the following examples:

(a) News from *Net Ease* on March 24th: On the morning of March 8th, the MH370 flying to Beijing was out of touch with the ground after its taking off. There were 227 passengers in total, of which 12 were flight crew and 154 Chinese were in the airline. At 22:00 on March 24th, Malaysia's prime minister announced the airline

had crashed on the southern Indian Ocean; possibly no passengers were to survive.

In this piece of news, information units are included as follows:

- i. The MH370 flying to Beijing was out of touch with the ground after its taking off (core information)
- ii. On the morning of March 8th (diachronic information)
- iii. At 22:00 on March 24th (synchronic information)
- iv. There were 227 passengers in total, of which 12 were flight crew and 154 Chinese were in the plane (supplementary information)
- v. Malaysia's prime minister announced the airplane had crashed on the southern Indian Ocean; no passengers were possible to survive (supplementary information)

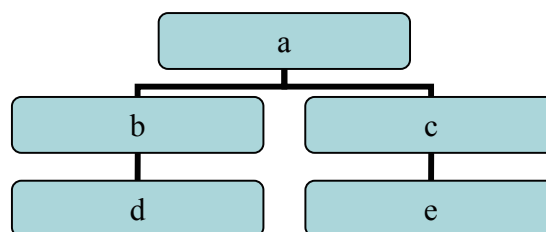


Figure 1
Each Subordinate Information Is Coordinate

(b) News from *Xinhua Net* on March 10th: The United Morning Post of Singapore reported that according to Malaysia's Interior Ministry, two men with Asian appearance had used two lost passports of Italian's and Austrian's to board the missing Malaysian airliner. The Interpol had joined the investigation to check whether the other passengers' passports in MH370 were suspicious.

In this piece of news, information units are included as follows:

- i. Two men with Asian appearance had used two lost passports of Italian's and Austrian's to board the missing Malaysian airliner (core information)
- ii. The United Morning Post of Singapore reported that according to Malaysia's Interior Ministry (intertextuality information)
- iii. The Interpol had joined the investigation to check whether the other passengers' passports in MH370 were suspicious (supplementary information)

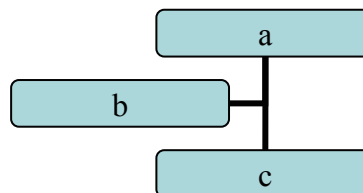


Figure 2
Each Subordinate Information Has Paradigmatic Relationship

(c) News from *Observer Network* on April 15th: The latest situation in Ukraine indicated when the Ukraine situation was in a continuous tense, a silent battle between America and Russia was on the way. The pentagon claimed on 14th that a Russian aircraft approached many times to the American missile destroyers sailing on the Black Sea, the shortest distance between them was only 900 meters.

In this piece of news, information units are included as follows:

- i. A silent battle between America and Russia was on the way (core information)
- ii. The Ukraine situation was in a continuous tense (supplementary information)
- iii. The pentagon claimed on 14th that a Russian aircraft approached many times to the American missile destroyers sailing on the Black Sea (intertextuality information)
- iv. The shortest distance between them was only 900 meters (supplementary information)
- v. The Cuban missile crisis (implied intertextuality information)

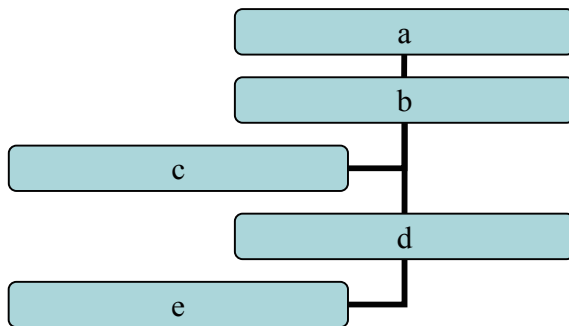


Figure 3
Each Subordinate Information Has Both Longitudinal and Horizontal Polymerization

From the above information graphs we can find the existence of intertextuality information doesn't change the overall structure of news discourse but make the tree structure of it complicated, for they not only provide a time series but a space narrative structure, which in a certain degree increases the feeling difficulty to the audience. Generally, international news reports the important world-wide events with a function of conveying information, judging international situation and promoting international influence of a nation or a region, even

fighting for rights of speech. Therefore, the discourse information of international news is always between the language surface of discourse and the cognitive underlying of discourse, which has signified (convey a message) and purpose (persuade and influence others through commands and pleas), among which intertextuality elements of quotation, allusion, parody, blending and cliché can be included. In fact, the essence of understanding a piece of news is a psychological cognitive process from ostension to inference. First, audience may make a simple inference at the sight of a piece of news to gain optimal relevance with little efforts, getting a preliminary interpretation. However, the news publisher sometimes doesn't make a direct statement but endows much implied information in it so that audience are forced to mobilize their existing knowledge to find new relevance, even refer to the past pieces of news to decode it.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that a piece of news contains a discourse information structure, in which each basic scattered unit of information unites together through a kind of tension, forming an overall information chain at last. Because news purpose is to transfer the latest information, causing the audience's attention, not only the time and content of a piece of news must be paid much attention to, but the space narrative skills also need to be considered. The intervention of intertextuality draws audience's attention to the news implied meaning so that news narrative texts may be interpreted with multiple points of view.

REFERENCES

- Gate Scandal*. (2014, August 26). Baidu Net. Retrieved from <http://baike.baidu.com/view/1038317.htm?fr=aladdin>
- Li, J. H. (2016). *The outline of Western literary theories*. Retrieved July 30 from <http://gz.eywedu.com/Philology/57>
- Luo, X. M., & Yu, Y. H. (2014). Intertextuality and business advertising translation. *Foreign Language Teaching*, 35(3), 92-96.
- Sun, G. Y. (2010). News discourse analysis under intertextuality theory. *Journal of Northeast Agricultural University (Social Science)*, 8(4), 62-66.
- Yan, J. S. (2013). Text refactoring: On the narrative perspective of mass communication. *News Research*, (09), 21-22.