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Invoking Implicit Attitude: The Play of Graduation in News Text of China Daily

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Abstract: The news text, unlike other texts, tends to directly or indirectly convey the media's attitudes or thoughts with the implicit appraisal resources. Martin pointed out that graduation resource is the most significant approach to realize the implicit evaluation in the text and the scaling semantic meaning may flag the evaluation. This paper analyzed the role of graduation in English-language China Daily and then discussed the covert attitude encoded in the news text.

Keywords: Graduation; Implicit evaluation; News text.

1. Introduction

The news text always expresses the news reporters' attitude, as well as the media's stance and ideology. Fowler (1991) pointed out that the media tend to employ language resources, which are encoded with certain covert attitudinal denotation, to report the events happening besides us in order to coordinate the stance and align the readers. Martin's Appraisal System Theory (AST) provides a powerful analytic tool for evaluation analysis of news text. It consists of three sub-systems: attitude, engagement and graduation. According to Martin, the evaluation in the text is divided into the explicit and implicit evaluation. The explicit evaluation is regularly realized through the vocabulary with clear attitudinal meaning, while the implicit is expressed by some neutral semantic structure (but with attitudinal denotation) in the text. There are three approaches to realize the implicit evaluation (Martin and White, 2005): the lexical metaphor provokes the evaluation; the ideational meaning affords the evaluation; and the resources of graduation flag the evaluation. Graduation is the sub-system of Martin's AST, and it is central to the entire Appraisal system. Both attitude and engagement are always realized and mediated through the graduation. This paper aims to analyze the play of graduation in invoking the attitude and then explore the ideology and the stance in the news text.

2. The Theory Framework of Analysis

The AST evolved from the interpersonal function of the Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG). Many researchers (Jiang, 2009; Martin and Rose, 2003; Wang, 2009) all focused on the discourse semantic characteristic of the AST. The classic theory of interpersonal meaning in SFG concentrated on the exchange function of the clause, which mainly concerns exchange of goods, services or information through the participants' interaction. Actually, the interpersonal function is realized through Mood and Modality systems. Mood and Modality belong to the category of the clause grammar, while Appraisal System belongs to the category of the discourse semantics.

The SFG focuses on the "inter" dimension of the interpersonal meaning, while the AST concentrates on the "personal" aspects of the interpersonal meaning. "Appraisal is concerned with evaluation—the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned." (Martin and Rose, 2003) Martin's theory consists of three sub-systems: attitude, engagement and graduation. The attitude deals with our daily feelings, including emotional response, judgments of behavior and assessment of things. Engagement is mainly concerned with the source of attitudes. Graduation is the system about the scaling of attitudinal meaning and the intensity of engagement.

Force and Focus comprise the system of graduation, which is concerned with the scalability of meaning. Force refers to the cline (from low value to high value) of intensification and quantification, for example, *a very smart guy*, and *I'm a little troubled*. Focus is the cline from the core category to the peripheral category. The evaluated thing/person in the sharpening endpoint of the Focus cline possesses the typical attribute and the clear salience, for example, *pure evil* and *a clear break*, whereas, the appraised in the softening endpoint the Focus cline is vaguely concentrated on, for example, *I'm feeling kind of upset*.

3. Collecting Data

This paper studies the articles published in English-language *China Daily* within one week from May 11th to 17th in 2015. The English-language *China Daily* is one of the longest-established and the most popular national daily newspaper published in China. It is, with no doubt, one of the most influential newspapers. The standard for the selection of news texts was as follows: articles of between 200-500 words in length, about “China news” published in the printed broadsheet. The news texts were selected at random, which cover such areas as politics, economy, culture, education and so on. The approach to the analysis of the collected data is an exploratory or interpretative approach. The aim of this analysis is to explore the role of the graduation in news texts in invoking evaluation according to AST.

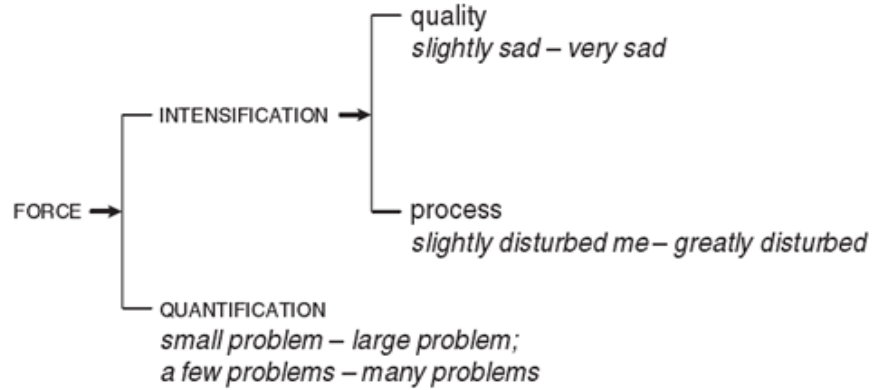
4. Discussion: The Play of Graduation in Invoking Attitude

4.1. Analysis of Force

Force is classified into Quantification and Intensification according to the applied entities. Force covers assessments as to degree of intensity and as to amount. Assessments of degree of intensity can operate over qualities. (eg. *slightly stupid, absolutely stupid*), over processes (eg. *It slightly upsets me and It greatly upsets me.*), or over the verbal modalities of likelihood, inclination and obligation.

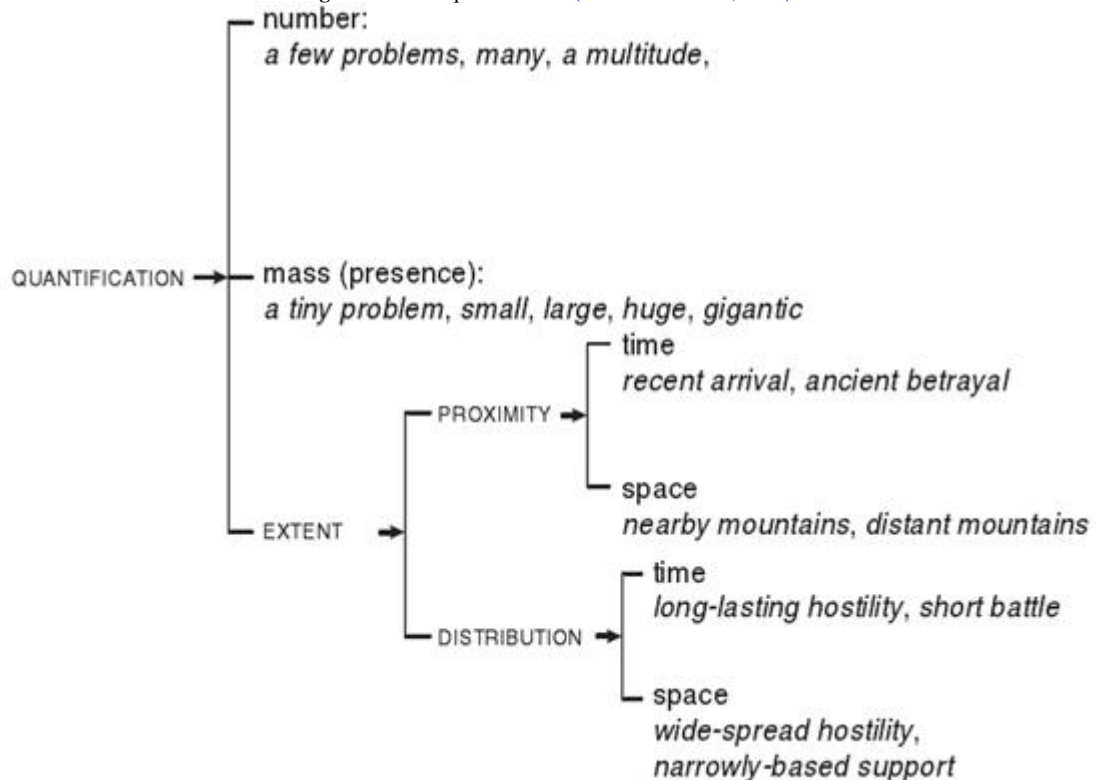
On the one hand, the term “intensificatio” is used to refer to this scalability of qualities and processes.

Figure-1. Force: intensification-quality and process (Martin and White, 2005)



On the other hand, we term the assessment of amount as “quantification”, which refers to the evaluation of number, mass/presence, and extent of the entities.

Figure-2. Force: quantification (Martin and White, 2005)



4.1.1. Quantification and Intensification

In English-language *China Daily* appear many examples of quantification and intensification, and then we analyze them according to the AST. At first, let's look at the application of quantification in the newspaper.

(1) The *magnitude-7.9* [quantification: mass] earthquake *on April 25* [quantification: extent: time], which had claimed *more than 8,000 lives* [quantification: number] *in Nepal* [quantification: extent: space] as of Sunday, killed *more than 25* [quantification: number] *in Tibet* [quantification: extent: space].

(2) China is developing an amphibious assault ship whose displacement will be *1.5 times larger* [quantification: mass] than the Japanese Izumo-class helicopter destroyer's *27,000 metric tons* [quantification: mass].

The examples of mass, extent and number of quantification all appear in example (1). The mass *magnitude-7.9* demonstrates the big scale of the earthquake. Equally, the number examples of *more than 8,000 lives* and *more than 25*, as well as the extent examples of *in Nepal* and *in Tibet*, also prove the destruction scale of the earthquake. Two examples of mass of quantification in example (2), *1.5 times larger* and *27,000 metric tons*, tell the readers that China's military force is stronger than Japanese. What is implied in this example is that it is unwise for Japanese to conflict with China.

Next, let's look at the examples of intensification in *China Daily*. Intensification refers to the assessment of quality and process, for example, *very beautiful* (quality) and *absolutely upset me* (process).

(3) The *comparatively* short deck cannot accommodate the fixed-wing J-15, and attack helicopters like the WZ-10 are slow and have a limited choice of weapons.

(4) Tourism *quickly* became a pillar industry of the province.

In example (3), *comparatively* is employed to modify the adjective "short", and it is to intensify the quality of the deck, but with the slightly weakening meaning, which implies that it is necessary to develop the military force in China to face the severe international situations. By contrast, the word *quickly* in example (4) functions to modify the verb "become", and belongs to the intensification of process. *Quickly* is the word encoded with the high value and as a result the utility of this word is to demonstrate the importance of tourism in china.

4.1.2. Isolating and Infusing Modes

According to the mode of evaluation, Force divides into two lexical-grammar categories-"isolating" and "infusing". The former refers that the graduation meaning is expressed by the isolated, individual item, while the latter refers that the up/down-scaling meaning of lexical item is expressed by its own semantic meaning as well as its isolated graduation meaning, for example, *the prices skyrocketed*. Both quantification and intensification have two kinds of mode: infusion and isolation.

(5) The country must be *totally* independent in food supply.

(6) The price of *domestically* produced corn....

The above two examples are the isolating mode of Force, which function to intensify the quality and process respectively. The intensified denotation is expressed solely with the isolated meaning, with the exception of the ideational meaning. The following are the examples of the infusing mode of evaluation:

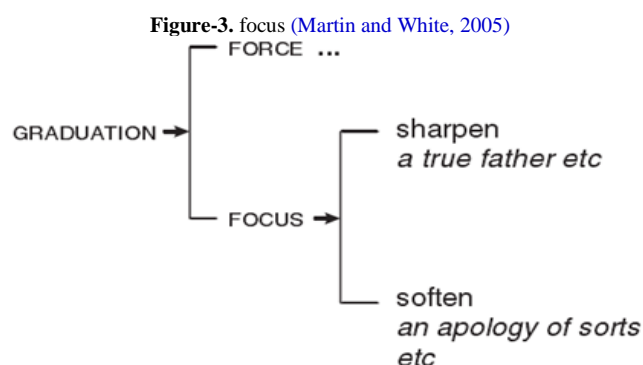
(7) China must resolve *a host of* technological and technical difficulties before it can develop a reliable short takeoff and vertical landing aircraft....

(8) Eight teams of searchers are *scouring* nearly 40,000 hectares of forest for wild pandas in Southwest China's Yunnan province.

According to the infusing mode, the degree of intensity of meaning is conveyed by the scaling of one aspect of the single term. Therefore, *A host of* not only carries the meaning of amount, but also infused ideational meaning. In example (8), the word *scouring* carries the ideational meaning of "search for" and most importantly it also implies the intensity degree of the action.

4.2. Analysis of Focus

From the viewpoint of the experiential function, many things and entities are not scalable. The jazz is some kind of music, but from interpersonal semantic angle, the person makes a judgment about this kind of music according to their inclination, music knowledge and even their characters. The persons' different subjective inclinations leads to the distinct assessment of the jazz, and as a result, the scalability is possible to occur.



(9) Some works featuring *Chinglish* translations have attracted the attention of linguists, Zhao said.

(10) The *ultimate* purpose is to ensure food security. But that does not mean that the country must be *totally* independent in food supply.

(11) So, while bribery in China may facilitate growth *to some extent*, it does not produce the kind of competitive business environment that supports long-term gains.

Chinglish in example (9) and *to some extent* in example (11) are exemplification of the softening Focus. *Chinglish* refers to this kind of Chinese learners' English that is different from the pure and standard English and belongs to the peripheral cline of prototypicality of English, which implies that the translation works are poor in quality. *To some extent* is also the example of softening Focus and have the low value of the intensity, with the implication that the bribery in China seemingly facilitate the growth, but actually is harmful to the economy development. The word *ultimate* carries the high value of the semantic meaning and tells the reader that the food safety is the high priority for the government.

5. Conclusion

The evaluation is central to the texts and utterances, and it is divided into explicit and implicit evaluation. Implicit evaluation functions to invoke the author's attitude. In this chapter, we have explored various means by which the news reporters can invoke attitude by scaling ideational meanings. By scaling ideational meaning writers subjectively position ideational meaning on a cline, implying a relative value (Hood and James, 2007). So, is necessary to analyze the implicit evaluation encoded in the newspaper reflecting the author's attitude and stance.

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