

Analysis of Public Opinion in News Reporting from the Perspective of Appraisal Gravity

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Abstract—Discourse analysis based on functional linguistics can provide a systematic and subtle description and interpretation of the discourse concerned in new media research, which will help promote the cognition of new media research at the discourse level. It also provides useful insights for discourse analysis. Taking the semantic codes in Carl Meadow’s Legitimacy Code Theory as the starting point and combining with the discussion of semantic gravity, the concept of “appraisal gravity” was proposed. It shows that the appraisal of core and edge should be distinguished in the process of such analysis. Aiming to promote the cognition of new media research at the discourse level and to demonstrate the function and effect of appraisal gravity in distinguishing core appraisal from marginal appraisal, this paper combining with the appraisal gravity of appraisal theory, analyzed news reports from the characteristics of Internet public opinion discourse and the focus of public opinion analysis. The results showed that the gravity of news reports is negatively correlated with its degree of concern.


Index Terms—analysis of public opinion; appraisal gravity; appraisal theory

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the popularization of smart mobile terminals, the network has become the main platform for people to express their views and criticize

the current disadvantages. At the same time, network public opinion has become a barometer of public opinion. Faced with the surging trend of Internet public opinion in China, it is particularly important to provide a systematic and subtle description, and interpretation of discourse concerned in the study of new media in the framework of systemic functional linguistics. In Discourse Analysis and New Media Research, functional linguistics as the framework of discourse analysis can provide a systematic and subtle description and interpretation of the discourse concerned in new media research, and help to promote the cognitive level of new media research. At the same time, the development of new areas such as public opinion analysis also provides useful inspiration for discourse analysis. New media discourse runs through the whole big data era and is an important factor affecting public governance. Effective news reporting can deepen the public’s understanding of society, and is conducive to the interaction between “media-citizen-government”. Domestic research on news reports started earlier, and there are many scholars. However, combined with the gravity of appraisal, only a few foreign language researchers have made a few attempts to analyze the public opinion of news reports. Table 1 below is the classification description of semantic gravity, which corresponds to the appraisal of gravity.

Table 1. Classification description of the appraisal of gravity.

appraisal of gravity	Semantic Units	Classification description of the appraisal of gravity
	view	It consists of various facts and statistical data and is not affected by human factors.
	summary	Describe or comment on the specific phenomena analyzed, and make a comprehensive summary of such things or phenomena.
	concreteness	Beyond the scope of personal experience and ideas, it is promoted to the narrative of specific things and affairs. One of the typical features is the removal of time feature marks.
	outline	A comprehensive overview of what has happened many times in the past.
	personal narration	It talks about personal experiences and ideas.

In the study of new media discourse such as news report, most scholars mainly focus on the language structure and basic features of news report, the mode, characteristics and principles of cooperation between the people and the government, and the way of information transmission in news report. In view of this, from the perspective of appraisal gravity, this paper explores the public opinion analysis of news reports, such as the

analysis of the identity characteristics of the main body of speech and the appraisal, analysis of various kinds of discourse, and analyses the asymmetry of news information and the asymmetry of power between new media and netizens in news reports, with a view to broadening the perspective of news reports research and further comprehensive analysis. The linguistic features of news reports are discussed. News discourse not only

maintains its established role in new media discourse, that is, the authority of describing and explaining phenomena, but also has an unequal power relationship with netizens. At the same time, in a specific context, news discourse also modifies and reconstructs its social identity, which is embodied as the understander, sympathizer and helper of netizens. In a sense, the public opinion analysis of news reports from the perspective of appraisal gravity analysis in this project not only provides a new perspective of journalistic linguistics, but also provides a better method and thought for easing tensions between new media platforms and netizens and exploring new media relations of equality, interaction and cooperation. In addition, this project's analysis of public opinion in news reports, in turn, broadens the application fields of discourse analysis such as public opinion analysis, and plays an active role in its development.

II. RESEARCH STATUS AT HOME AND ABROAD

In the early 1990s, Professor Martin gave an academic report at Macquarie University in Australia, presenting the appraisal system to the academic community for the first time [1]. Martin and his colleagues, from the perspectives of Narratology, Discourse Analysis and Genre [2], have studied the evaluative languages in narrative discourse. The purpose of the study is to explore news, science, technology, history, mathematics, management, geography, middle school language and art discourse, reading requirements [1,3-8] and providing guidance for middle school teachers in these disciplines on the use of language resources [9]. At present, the application of appraisal systems in discourse analysis at home and abroad can be roughly divided into 10 topics: (1) Analysis of newspapers and periodicals. The first application of appraisal theory in discourse analysis is White's doctoral thesis, which analyses the appraisal system in newspaper discourse. (2) Analysis of casual conversation. For example, a systematic model for analyzing and describing English casual conversations were set up from the perspectives of sociology, linguistics and critical semiotics. (3) Analysis of mother tongue learning. This is a natural case study. Cognitive development is essentially a linguistic process, which describes and explains the development of language and cognition. (4) Analysis of business packaging discourse. Martin uses appraisal theory to analyze the language of "warm comment". The corpus is a website's comment on pop music books and audiovisual works, and finds that it is full of very positive identification [10]. This involves the relationship between appraisal and genre, that is, the function of genre is to evaluate the value of something. (5) The analysis of historical discourse. The history examination papers of middle school students were analyzed and compared the two answers of the same question. In particular, it points out that historical discourse can be divided into three categories according to the choice of appraisal: recorder discourse, interpreter discourse and critic discourse. (6) Analysis of autobiographical discourse. The research in this area comes from the need for affirmative discourse analysis

[6]. Autobiography is an ideal classroom discussion and after-class reading material for English teaching. French Class and compared the students' retrospect of their English learning process show that the appraisal analysis in Autobiography is of positive significance to English teaching, attention to quality education in English teaching and culture teaching. (7) Analysis of speech discourse. (8) Analysis of news discourse. There are two solved problems: one is how to distribute appraisal resources in English science and technology news; the other there are appraisal characteristics in English science and technology news. This can help second language learners better understand such news. (9) Analysis of literary works. (10) The analysis of network discourse.

From the research point of view, the theoretical analysis of appraisal at home and abroad can be divided into three aspects: three sub-systems of appraisal system: Engagement, Attitude and Graduation. At the beginning of the appraisal system, the first subsystem, the emotional system, was established by Martin to observe the basic emotional cycle of his son, who was under two years old [2]. Since then, the system has been applied to the study of narrative discourse in middle school English [8,10]. The judgment system comes from Iedema et al. who studied the voice of the reporter in news discourse and the voice of the author in historical discourse [4]. Appreciation system originated from Joan Rothery, Mary Macken-Horarik and Aree Stenglin's research on visual arts and middle school English. Martin and his colleagues proposed six criteria for differentiating emotions. Martin then added unrealistic emotions to the emotional system: tendency or non-tendency, which determined the emotional system in the classical framework of the appraisal system. Emotional system belongs to individual emotion, which is different from judgment and appreciation system [3]. The latter belongs to institutionalized attitude. Appreciation is based on the appraisal of things by aesthetic standards [3]. Emotion is aimed at the appraiser-oriented, while judgment and appreciation are aimed at the appraiser-adjusted [8]. The judgment system is proposed by Feez, Iedema and White based on the modality system when they study the appraisal of meaning resources in different news discourses [5,9]. Iedema et al. divided the judgment system into social esteem and social sanction [5]. The subsystem of the appraisal system, i.e. the intervention system, was proposed based on the concepts of dialogue and heteroglossia and the study of popular scientific discourse. Intervention system refers to how the speaker projects himself and holds position in the discourse. It marks that the research of appraisal system has changed from static linguistic attitude to dynamic meaning negotiation. It argues that the role of interventional materials in discourse is not to reflect the author's recognition of the discourse, but to control the different voices in the discourse. White inherits and develops this argument in conjunction with the concept of "intertextuality" of Fairclough [11]. Another system of appraisal system, namely amplification, is the classification of attitudes and interventional resources.

White defines the basic framework of the range system, which is divided into force and focus according to the interpersonal and conceptual functions of language [12]. When applying appraisal theory to discourse analysis, analysts often regard appraisal resources as a means for speakers or writers to make personalized comments, especially the category of "attitude" in this theory can easily be understood as the attitudes of the evaluators themselves. Thompson and Hunston points out that appraisal is particularly challenging [13]. Therefore, it is particularly effective to manipulate readers with appraisal, especially when appraisal is not the main idea of clauses. This paper explores the strategies for non-core vocabulary to hide its subjective position by using its internal appraisal associative meaning. Trew studies the grammatical strategies of ideologically reconstructing violent events in news reporting, such as passive voice ambiguity center or marginal participants, contextualized human activity or subjective agent, and shifting responsibility [14]. O'Halloran explores the appraisal significance and ideological functions of lexical metaphor, transitivity and intertextuality [15]. White analyzed two sets of appraisal strategies of hard news events and sub-genres of problem reporting from the perspectives of textual interpersonal style and textual organization [12]. However, a large number of appraisal resources are highlighting the main clues of discourse and putting forward the appraisal gravity to distinguish the appraisal with different degree of relevance to the context, which provides theoretical support for the effective differentiation and quantitative statistics of core appraisal resources.

The prosperity of public opinion analysis seems to exceed the impact of discourse analysis. It has become a new type of media research that more researchers pay attention to. The new effective methods of language research in China have made great progress in the past two or three decades. In linguistics, public opinion analysis has been improved qualitatively from the perspective of discourse analysis and Martin's appraisal theory. The basic issues of public opinion analysis are: the analysis of the identity characteristics of the subject of speech and the appraisal analysis of various discourses. It holds that language use is always reflected in a certain context, which refers to the larger macro-contextual elements based on social, cultural and political differences, rather than just the micro-contextual elements such as the direct context, the speaker's background knowledge, or the contextual elements such as speech events and discourse types. Generally speaking, domestic public opinion analysis mainly involves the following areas: public opinion analysis of institutional discourse; organizational discourse public opinion analysis; multimedia discourse public opinion analysis;

political discourse public opinion analysis; public opinion analysis of racial discrimination, gender and identity issues and so on.

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