Positive Discourse Analysis of Attitude System in Economic News

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Abstract

As a mass media, news report becomes a primary means for people to obtain information and thus it plays an important role in people's daily life. Therefore, it has attracted much attention from scholars in varied fields. In recent years, many people have conducted researches on news under the framework of appraisal theory but most of them take political news or civil news as their corpora and only few of them take economic news as their research object. Besides, most of the previous studies have applied critical discourse analysis approach to study news but the present paper has used the approach of positive discourse analysis to analyze economic news based on appraisal theory. The thesis mainly takes one piece of economic news as an example: China's Consumers Still kicking, which was published on Economist in April of 2016 and aims to find out the characteristics of the distribution of attitudes resources in this news as well as to work out what the reason for it.

Key words: Appraisal Theory, positive discourse analysis, economic news

1. Introduction

Appraisal Theory is a development of systemic functional linguistics and it is proposed to make up the inadequacy of the interpersonal metafunction and it provides a systemic means for analyzing the attitudes in interpersonal meanings. It was first proposed by J.R.Martin in1994 when he took charge of the project "Write It Right". Later he and Rose cowrote "Working with Discourse" and in this book he gave a definition of appraisal theory as "it is about appraisal and it appraises various attitudes, intensity of feelings consulted in discourses and all the ways demonstrating values or alliance readers."Appraisal Theory has been widely applied in various types of discourses, including news, novels, academic paper. For news, most of scholars have done studies on political news and civil news and economic news relatively remains to be a new field for scholars to study. Besides, many of researches are from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, which insists on taking negative view to see the world, to analyze the appraisal resource in news and try to find out the ideology beyond the news. As more and more countries have communicated with each other and

their relations have become more and more close, under this background many scholars have shifted their focus from critical discourse analysis to positive discourse analysis. Few of domestic studies use this approach to analyze economic news, so this paper takes economic news as its corpus in order to enlarge researches in this field.

2. Theoretical Framework

Since Appraisal Theory was put forward, it has been widely used to analyze different types of discourses in order to help readers to understand author's stance and attitudes. For example, some scholars like Li Zhanzi has applied this theory to study academic papers and others like Shan Xuguang has done researches on science thesis from the perspective of appraisal theory. Besides, some scholars like Shang Biwu has investigated on fairy tales or novels under the framework of appraisal theory.

Positive Discourse Analysis was based on and developed from critical discourse analysis. Positive discourse analysis was first proposed in "positive discourse analysis: solidarity and change" which was presented by J.R.Martin in the International Conference on Critical Discourse Analysis held in Birmingham. Martin points out that positive discourse analysis is a complementary perspective of critical discourse analysis and positive discourse analysis adopts a constructive angle and positive attitude to solve social conflicts and expects to establish a harmonious society through discourse analysis rather than to take negative approach like critical analysis does. News is one of the most frequent ways to report social events and it has earned great importance among people's daily life. For this reason, many scholars have taken news as their research object by adopting discourse analysis approach. In earlier stage, scholars like Huang Qin has studied translation of news from critical discourse analysis point of view. Later, people have turned their sights to positive discourse analysis. For instance, Yang Tingting has made positive discourse analysis of political speeches. Others like Liu Xin has made a comparison of attitude resource between Chinese political discourse and English discourse.

3. Analysis of Economical News

The appraisal theory consists of three branches: attitude, engagement, and graduation, among which attitude system is the core of appraisal theory. Attitude system refers to people's appreciation and judgment to human behave, text, process and phenomenon after people are affected in psychology. Therefore, attitude system can be further divided into three subsystems: judgment, affect, and appreciation. Among these three subsystems, affect is the center of the whole system, from which affect and appreciation are derived. Language has many appraisal devices to express appraisal or attitudes and they are not limited in lexical level but also in syntax level and so on. Among them, lexical level is the most frequent to have appraisal devices. The present paper mainly explores the lexical level of economic news to find out the resources of attitudes and to see them how to reflect people's attitudes towards events reported in news. This research only selected one piece of news published in Economist in April of 2016, which called China's Consumers Still Kicking and this news contains about 1200 words. By adopting quantitative and qualitative method to analyze lexical words in the news and to count their frequencies according to the classification of their attitude system as well as their positiveness or negativeness. The result are as follows.

Table 1 Frequency and Proportion of Resources of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation in Economic News

Attitude System	Affect		Judgment		Appreciation	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Frequency	6	0	11	1	55	13
Ratio/%	7%	0	12.8%	1.2%	63.9%	15.1%
Total/%	7%		14%		79%	

From the above table, appreciation system is most frequently used, judgment ranks the second and affect system is least applied. Their proportion are 79%, 14% and 7% respectively. The reason why appreciation system makes up the largest proportion is that news pursues for being objective and real and affect system is the most subjective and direct system in the attitude system. If the resources of affect system is widely used in news, then it may influence the objectivity and reality required by news. This is why affect system accounts for the least part. Besides, news is usually about social phenomenon and real events, thus news concerns more about the influence on people by these events as well as their response. Therefore, this may explain why judgment and appreciation system take up more proportion than affect system.

3.1 Affect system

Form table 1, we can also know that affect system can be divided into positive side and negative side. For positive meaning, we may have delight, happy, wish, honor, ect. Negative meaning can bring people negative feelings like sad, fear, and anxious. In this pieces of news, there are no negative words from affect system and all of them are in positive side.

For example,

1.Many big firms seem willing to look past current clouds over China's economy to brighter days ahead.

2.That fuels a bristling optimism.

3.Analysts underestimate the Chinese economy… the fundamentals are good.

In the above three examples, we can see that "willing", "good" and "optimism" these words all convey positive affect meaning to show that many firms and economic analysts thinks that Chinese consumption economy looks promising and still have prospects. From positive discourse analysis point of view, these affect resources are used to show that Chinese consuming economy are in good condition so when readers read the news, they will be at ease and still keep optimistic view of Chinese economy, which will help to stabilize society.

3.2 Judgment system

Resource of judgment system has made up 14%, which takes the second place. Judgment system belongs to domain of ethic. It is tried to appraise the behavior of language users based on ethics. In other words, judgment refers to the resources of attitudinal evaluation from which human behavior can be positively or negatively assessed with reference to social ethics. According to White (2011), judgment can be divided into social esteem and social sanction. The former includes normality, capacity and tenacity and the latter

concerns veracity and propriety. In addition, social esteem and social sanction both have positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect of social esteem is admiration and the negative one of that is criticism. As for social sanction, its positive meaning is praise and the negative one is condemnation.

In this research, there are more positive resources of judgment than negative resources and most of positive resources of judgment belong to positive society esteem. The following are some examples which have used judgment system.

4. A cooling economy and an official anti-corruption drive have squeezed luxury goods, sales of which fell by 2% year on year in 2015, to 113 billion yuan.

5. One temporary source of comfort is the fact that the state sector may now itself be stabilizing, thanks to a massive, debt-fuelled government stimulus.

6. The dynamism of the mostly-private consumer sector comes not from stimulus, argues Andy Rothman of Matthews Asia, an investment firm, but from strong income growth and low household debt.

Example 5 tells that because of measures of anti-corruption adopted by Chinese government and depressed economy, sales of luxury goods in China have decreased a lot. Although consumption of luxury goods have decreased a lot, official anti-corruption should be praised. From the following context of example 5, we know that this measure has not affected some luxury goods and on the whole, this news does not criticize this behavior. In example 6, we can know that Chinese government has made some efforts to stimulate Chinese economy and this can protect the state-owned firms' benefits. Example 7 has said that Chinese private-sectors remain dynamic because increasing income and low household debt. So this example has made a positive social esteem of people's living condition.

3.3 Appreciation system

Appreciation is the resources which evaluate text, process and phenomena. It is included in the aesthetic domain and consists of reaction, composition and valuation. According to Halliday, reaction refers to emotional reaction which contains impact and quality. Impact has to do with the attraction of text, process and quality is to explore how much impact made by text, process on affect. For composition, it can also be divided into two parts: balance and detail. Valuation is concerned with the significance of text, process when the text, process is investigated with reference to social criteria.

From table 1, we know that appreciation system takes the largest proportion and within this system, most of words convey positive appreciation meaning in this news because the news has used many words to describe how Chinese economy has improved a lot in recent years.

For instances:

7. After years of expansion, the smartphone market is peaking. Some firms still thrive: China's Huawei, a telecoms giant, predicts that revenues from its consumer-devices division will rise by about 50% this year.

8. The services sector, which caters to the growing demands of the middle class, has been rising by 8% a year in real terms since 2012.

9. A cooling economy and an official anti-corruption drive have squeezed luxury goods, sales of which fell by 2% year on year in 2015, to 113 billion yuan.

But some firms are doing well.

10. Apple itself announced weaker results on April 26th (see article). Revenues from sales in greater China fell by 26% year on year.

By looking through these examples, we can find that the number of positive appreciation words is larger than negative appreciation words and most of them are verbs and adjectives like peaking, growing, rise, well, ect. As this is a economic news, it employs many verbs like rise, peak, thrive to describe the increasing Chinese consuming economy which is a good phenomenon. Although some negative appreciation words have appeared in example 10, including weaker, fell, which are used to describe the profit in China market gained by Apple company is decreasing, yet if we connect the context with example 10, we could know that Chinese domestic mobile phone company has thrived like Huawei and Xiaomi and their appearance influences the Apple company's sales. Even there appear negative resources of appreciation. However, this will not affect readers' judgment about Chinese consuming economy in good condition and readers still can draw conclusion that the overall mood of this news is positive.

4. Conclusion

From the distribution of attitude system in this economic news, we can know that the meaning of attitude is mostly realized by judgment system and appreciation system, while affect system takes the least proportion. Besides, among these three systems, there are more positive words than negative words in this news. The distribution of attitudinal resources in the economic news is decided by the characteristics and nature of events reported by news. From the perspective of positive discourse analysis, although this news has employed some negative attitude words to describe Chinese economy, and this just tells the fact of economy rather than to criticize it. This news also tells readers that when Chinese government faces depressed economy, they have made efforts to look for solutions and this is aim of positive discourse analysis—— try to build a harmonious society. Because this is a economic news, it usually uses some verbs or adjectives to tell the increase or decrease of the economy, which contributes to more appreciation words than others. And also by using both negative and positive words, this can help readers have a comprehensive understanding of Chinese consumption and this will increase objectivity of news.

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