

Positive Discourse Analysis of Journalistic Discourses about Sino-Foreign Relations from the Attitude Perspective of Appraisal Theory

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Abstract: Taking J. R. Martin's Appraisal Theory as the theoretical framework, this paper will analyse the journalistic discourses about "the ASEAN-China Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations" on China Daily from the perspective of positive discourse analysis, in order to explore the use of attitude resources and the discourse meanings conveyed in the article of the "Commemorative Summit", and reveal its distinctive discourse organization pattern. The study shows that the journalistic discourse uses a large number of positive words and contexts to build a harmonious linguistic environment, which is conducive to fully presenting a positive image of China under the initiative of "building a community with a shared future for mankind".

Keywords: China; ASEAN; Appraisal Theory; Attitude Resources; Positive Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

Since the establishment of dialogue relations between China and ASEAN in the 1990s, China and ASEAN have always been in a friendly cooperation, working together to maintain regional peace and stability, boosting economic integration in East Asia, and promoting prosperity and development of all countries in the region. Over the past 30 years, China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have jointly seized the opportunities of economic globalization and achieved leapfrog development together. At a time when the global epidemic of COVID-19 was spreading rapidly, the world was facing the greatest change in a century, and the international situation was increasingly tense, China and ASEAN have always helped each other and overcome difficulties together, which set an excellent example of regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and explored a bright path of good neighborliness and win-win cooperation. Both of them are expecting to make the construction of a community with a shared future. This paper will take one journalistic discourse about "the 30th Anniversary Summit of China-ASEAN Dialogue" (hereinafter referred to as the "Commemorative Summit") on the *China Daily* as the object of study. It will investigate the use of attitude resources and the meaning of the discourse conveyed in this newspaper article of the "Commemorative Summit" from the perspective of Appraisal Theory, trying to exploring how the discourse successfully achieves a positive negotiation between the writer and his readers.

2. Theoretical Framework

Nowadays, the study of discourse in linguistic circles is mainly divided into critical discourse analysis and positive discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis, CDA, was proposed by British scholar Roger Flower in *Language and Control* in 1979. CDA reveals the relationship between discourse, power and ideology from the standpoint of "criticism", "disclosure" and "negation", with the purpose of eliminating inequality and deconstructing the existing social system [1]. "Criticism", "exposure" and "deconstruction" of CDA have a strong negative color, and the realization of social change has a sense of struggling, but there are no positive improvement methods [2], because it attaches too much importance to criticism, which is not conducive to the harmonious development of society. Thus, positive discourse analysis is produced for the deficiency of critical discourse analysis [3]. Positive discourse analysis, PDA, was first proposed by Australian scholar J.R. Martin in *Positive Discourse Analysis: Solidity and Change* in 1999. In his opinion, the object of discourse analysis

should not be limited in some “bad news” containing inequality, but also the “good news” advocating harmony and equality [4]. Zhu Yongsheng, a domestic scholar, also discussed the relationship between positive discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis in detail [5]. He held the viewpoint that PDA is not just a straight denial of CDA, but a supplement and further development of the former discourse analytic methods.

Appraisal Theory is a grammatical framework developed from Systemic Functional Linguistics for the study of interpersonal meaning, and it is the theoretical basis of PDA (positive discourse analysis), which consists of three subsystems: attitude system, engagement system and gradation system [6]. The attitude system also includes three systems of affect, appreciation and judgment, which are used to express people’s emotions, to evaluate someone’s character and behavior, and to assess the value of things. All of the three systems can be positive and negative, explicit and implicit [7]. In this paper, the journalistic discourse on *China Daily* about the topic of “Commemorative Summit” will be analyzed at the lexical level from the aspect of attitude system to explore the use of attitude resources and the positive discourse meaning conveyed in the discourse.

3. Discourse Analysis

This paper used the news texts about “China-ASEAN 30th Anniversary Summit” on *China Daily* as the object for data analysis, ranked them according to relevance, and selected one article with the strongest correlation, which was named as *Next stage of their extraordinary journey begins with China, ASEAN upgrading ties* [8], as the object of study. This article was written by the commentary department of *China Daily*, and thus it showed a lot of attitude and viewpoints towards events or other people’s actions, which is meaningful to further analysis. In this paper, this article will be analyzed by quantitative and qualitative analysis, and the general distribution of attitude resources is presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1: The Distribution of Attitude Resources

Type	Number	Examples	Percentage
Affect	13	joint, shared, invaluable, good	37%
Judgment	8	strengthen, uphold, sustainable, safeguard stability	23%
Appreciation	14	significance, new impetus, promote prosperity, benefits, sense of gain	40%

3.1 Affect System

Affect system refers to the various feelings or reactions of the writer or speaker towards certain actions, phenomena or things based on personal preference [9], and there is a distinction between positive and negative feelings of people. As it is shown in the above figure, there are 13 affect resources which is accounting for 37%, and the text applies quite a few positive and active words to express the writer’s affirmation and best wishes that China and ASEAN will continue to cooperate friendly in the future, which can be seen in the following examples.

Example 1

This shared experience has been invaluable, as President Xi Jinping observed on Monday.

The word “invaluable” in example 1, as an explicit attitude resource, directly expressed the author’s emotional attitude and conveyed a positive discourse meaning. The application of the word “invaluable” in the discourse showed that the shared experience of cooperation between China and ASEAN in the past 30 years was extremely invaluable, especially when they have fought together with sincerity against the international financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and other new challenges. It was because of such a shared experience that today, 30 years later, China and ASEAN have taken their cooperative relations to a new level, established a comprehensive strategic partnership, built a deep friendship and cooperation, and made crucial contributions to the prosperity of the countries in the region and the well-being of the people in the regions.

Example 2

As Xi noted, China was, is, and will always be ASEAN’s good neighbor, good friend and good partner.

In the example 2, it used three “good” in one sentence to express the author’s positive attitudes and

feelings towards ASEAN clearly. By quoting President Xi Jinping's speech, it shows that China always regards ASEAN as a close partner and is willing to continue to work together with ASEAN. What's more, we have the willingness to deepen the cooperative relationship between China and ASEAN and jointly promote the peace, stability, prosperity and development of the regions. China will also walk hand in hand with ASEAN to the next stage of their extraordinary journey.

3.2 Judgment System

Judgment system refers to the language user's judgment on a behavior or phenomenon based on certain social norms, laws and regulations. It can be divided into two categories: social esteem and social sanction. The former includes three categories of normality, capacity and tenacity [10] and the latter judges the truthfulness of events and justification of behavior. The judgment resources in the discourse account for a relatively small amount of 23%, but the text uses numerous positive words in the categories of capacity and tenacity, which successfully constructs a positive relation between the writer and his readers. The specific analysis is as follows.

Example 3

Speaking via video link at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of China-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, he called it a "shared asset" that the two sides "need to doubly cherish" and uphold over the long run.

Citing from President Xi's speech, example 3 used the positive word "uphold" of the judgment resource to highlight the attitude and viewpoint of the Chinese government to demonstrate the close relationship and the shared experience between China and ASEAN are precious and valuable. Also, it affirmed the importance of holding the "Commemorative Summit" and manifested China's determination to maintain friendly cooperative relations with ASEAN in the long run for achieving mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

Example 4

Since the United States is trying to sow discord in the region, China and ASEAN should make joint efforts to safeguard stability in the South China Sea...

In example 4, the author used "make efforts" and "safeguard" which was two positive words and phrases belong to the capacity of judgment resources, reflecting that maintaining the stability of the South China Sea is a common strategic requirement for China and ASEAN countries in the face of American disturbances and disagreements. China and ASEAN should work together to exclude external interference, and both sides will resolutely oppose hegemonism and power politics. At the same time, we hope to live in harmony with neighboring countries and keep the international peace and long-term stability in the region effectively, which aims to build the South China Sea into a sea of peace, cooperation and friendship.

3.3 Appreciation System

Appraisal system refers to the language users' evaluation of texts, actions or natural phenomena according to aesthetic standards [11]. It includes not only the evaluation of things themselves, but also the appreciation of the values they embody. Appraisal systems can be divided into three categories: reaction, composition and valuation. Reaction refers to the effect of the text on the emotional aspect of the reader; composition refers to the balance of the text structure as well as the comprehensibility of the details; valuation refers to judge whether the text has significant value according to the social criteria. There are 14 appreciation resources in the discourse, accounting for the biggest proportion of 40%. It highlights the importance of this "Commemorative Summit" and fully demonstrates the value of the friendship, cooperation and the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership between China and ASEAN. Here are three examples of appreciation resources.

Example 5

Over the past 30 years, China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have jointly seized the opportunities of economic globalization to achieve leapfrog development together.

The phrases "seize the opportunities" and "leapfrog development" in example 5 demonstrated that after more than 30 years of cooperation, China and ASEAN countries, stimulated by economic globalization, have stepped into a new stage of economic cooperation. In recent years, they made some

remarkable progress together, and their economic development has been more deeply and comprehensively integrated into the world. Besides, they have injected new impetus into the development of China-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership at a new starting point. With the “Commemorative Summit” as the discourse intermediary, Chinese mainstream media have shaped the image of an oriental powerful and peaceful country for China, and China is sharing a common destiny with the world.

Example 6

And in doing so, they have ensured regional stability, spearheaded economic integration in East Asia, and explored a bright path of good-neighborliness and win-win cooperation.

The positive words in appreciation resources such as “ensure” and “spearhead” in example 6 reflected that over the past three decades, China and ASEAN have adhered to win-win cooperation, upheld multilateralism and jointly built a community with a shared future for mankind, which contributed mightily to the long-term stability, prosperity and advancement of the region. Moreover, the two sides have worked together and support for each other, which has made the construction of a community with a shared future full of bright prospects. The “Commemorative Summit” has set an example for future development of the cooperation, which also made new contributions to promoting the better growth of China and ASEAN countries and built a community with a shared future for mankind.

Example 7

The measures highlight that by making their cooperation more extensive and intensive they can build on what has been achieved and deliver real benefits and a greater sense of gain to peoples in the region and beyond.

The evaluative words and phrases in appreciation resources such as “benefits” and “sense of gain” in example 7 displayed positively that the significance of the cooperation between the two sides in the economic, financial and other aspects, which could bring great benefits and a sense of gain to the people of all regions. The writer praised the accomplishments of the cooperation between China and ASEAN and affirmed its value in improving the well-being of the people of the world. Additionally, the relations between China and ASEAN will become a vivid example of promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, injecting new impetus into world peace and stability.

4. Conclusion

Based on the attitude system in the appraisal theory and by using the method of positive discourse analysis, this paper tries to explore the positive discourse meaning of attitude resources in the foreign news corpus of “the 30th Anniversary Summit of Dialogue Relations between China and ASEAN”. Through the method of quantitative and qualitative analysis, the author showed the distribution of the affect resources, judgment resources as well as appreciation resources. Appreciation resources account for the most, followed by affect resources, and the least proportion belongs to judgment resources. After the careful statistics and analysis, we can draw the conclusion below.

Firstly, appreciation resources account for the biggest proportion in all of the three resources, highly affirming the significance of the “Commemorative Summit” and expressing the stronger sense of promoting bilateral friendly partnership and cooperation. It created a harmonious emotional environment for readers and conveys a message that China is willing to stand with all of the countries that is longing for peace and hopes that they can form a community with a shared future to fight against new challenges together.

Secondly, the positive words of affect resources demonstrated that the cooperative relationship between China and ASEAN has reached a new stage and made remarkable contributions to the prosperity and development of countries in the region, which conveyed positive feelings.

Thirdly, the words of capacity in judgment resources are largely applied in the discourse, which reflected that China and ASEAN countries through joint efforts have injected new impetus into the upgrading of their relations and the development of China-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership.

In short, through the positive discourse analysis of the attitude resources, we can learn that the domestic Medias try to enhance the friendly relationship between China and ASEAN by creating a

positive language environment for the foreign journalistic discourses of “Commemorative Summit”. In addition, it constructs a positive image of China, responsible and friendly, showing China’s firm belief in promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind and a new type of international relations.

This paper is still not mature enough, which has many weaknesses. For example, due to the limitation of the space, this paper just be analyzed from the perspective of attitude resources, actually it can be continued from other aspects. In addition, the materials for analysis are insufficient. A large number of statistics can be concluded from some long texts, which will make the results of analysis more reliable. In the further study, we can use a variety of corpus with different sources and analyze the discourse from the level of sentences instead of just focusing on the words or phrases.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by Anhui Xinhua University 2020 Provincial Student Innovation Training Program: Positive Discourse Analysis of Attitude Resources in Chinese “Anti-epidemic” News Discourse from the Perspective of Appraisal Theory (Project Number: 202012216070); Anhui Xinhua University 2021 National Student Innovation Training Program (Project Number: 202112216047).

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