

The Proceedings of 2023 Youth Academic Forum on Linguistic, Literature, Translation and Culture

March 31, 2023, Hangzhou, China

The American Scholars Press

Editors: Jia Zhao, Lisa Cox, Jin Zhang
Cover Designer: Sibol Li

Published by
The American Scholars Press

The Proceedings of 2023 Youth Academic Forum on Linguistic, Literature, Translation and Culture is published by the American Scholars Press, Marietta, Georgia, USA.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Copyright © 2024 by the American Scholars Press

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 979-8-9875808-7-5

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

In 2022, the School of International Studies at Zhejiang University held the second Undergraduate Academic Innovation Conference and carefully selected 31 outstanding papers for publication afterward. This marked the first collection of undergraduate academic papers entirely in English for the school. The publication of the collection received positive feedback. Dong Jing, who stood out in the thesis collection, won the first prize of the undergraduate group in the 9th Student Humanities and Social Sciences Outstanding Achievement Award of Zhejiang University, which was the first time that an undergraduate student from the School had won the first prize in this prestigious award. Additionally, students who excelled in the collection were invited to publicly present their papers in English, which were then disseminated via the internet, allowing peers and students nationwide to witness the performance of these outstanding students.

Both the Academic Innovation Conference and the publication of the thesis collection have enhanced undergraduates' awareness of innovation, strengthened their understanding of foreign language disciplines, and sparked their interest and passion for research. They have gained insight into the complete chain of academic training, including topic selection, data collection, research, argumentation, paper writing, and manuscript revision. Under the strict guidance of their tutors and review experts, their papers went through multiple revisions, making them realize that the pursuit of excellence and perfection is an essential booster on the academic path. As the organizer of the Academic Innovation Conference and the chief editor of the proceedings, we are delighted to provide opportunities for students to engage in learning and training on their academic path. This enables students to understand the academic research process and discover possibilities within themselves, and if any of them take this as a starting point, choose to embark on a lifelong journey in research and ultimately grow into outstanding researchers, our efforts will have achieved our intended effect.

On March 31, 2023, the School held the 3rd Undergraduate Academic Innovation Conference, which summarized the initiatives and achievements made by the School in undergraduate research in recent years. Over the past five years, a total of 214 undergraduate research projects have been initiated in the School, with 57 projects initiated in 2023, marking the highest number in history. Several international and domestic student academic seminars have also been organized. Besides the annual Undergraduate Academic Innovation Conference, the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies of World Literature of Zhejiang University, the General Education Center of Academic Affairs Office of Zhejiang University Undergraduate School, and the English Department of the School of Foreign Languages of Zhejiang University, have been hosting the "International Leading Forum on Interdisciplinary Research in Literary Ethics Criticism" for four consecutive years, contributing actively to the expansion of literary ethics research. The departments of German, French, and Spanish organized national undergraduate academic forums respectively, leading nationwide undergraduate professional development and student education, providing students with cross-institutional, multi-disciplinary research and

innovation exchange platforms. This initiative has gained widespread acclaim from domestic counterparts. Particularly noteworthy is the introduction of the inaugural National High School French Academic Innovation Forum by the French major, which pushes the front-end of academic talent cultivation to the secondary school stage and is a pioneering move in exploring the articulated cultivation of secondary school-college French talents. We also encourage undergraduates to actively participate in international academic conferences. In the past three years, 33 of them have participated in international academic conferences or international research internships, where they have been able to listen to the latest trends in the international academic world and express their own insights on the international stage.

In order to showcase the research achievements of undergraduate students and to continue to promote their international publications, we have selected 31 outstanding papers after this conference and released the second issue of the all-English academic paper collection for undergraduates. We follow closely all the policies and ethical principles established by the publisher in terms of organizing academic conferences and publishing proceedings. We also teach students the process of how the paper is reviewed and what the blind review process and what the APA style are. Professors and experts rigorously evaluated the selected papers, which have undergone several revisions and gradually matured over time.

The accepted papers are categorized into four sections: Literature, Linguistics, Translation Studies, and Regional and National Studies. The Literature section takes up a significant proportion, reflecting the following six research interests and characteristics:

1. Interdisciplinary research methodology: “Justice Unveiled: Legal and Poetic Dimensions in Kleist’s *Michael Kohlhaas*” employs concepts from jurisprudence to explore issues of judicial fairness in Kleist’s work, as well as how individuals rectify judicial injustice through so-called poetic justice. “Meteorological Vocabulary in *Doctor Zhivago*: Parts of Speech and Semantic Valency” examines meteorological vocabulary in *Doctor Zhivago* based on lexical distribution and semantic collocation. “Indirect Communication in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*” applies linguistic theory to study indirect communication in Austen’s novel.
2. Religious, philosophical, and ethical connotations in literary works: “The Ultimate Futility of the Bonfire of Reform and the Development of Ethical Sensibility in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Earth’s Holocaust*” explores ethical issues of the narrator. “A Study of the Idea of ‘Existence’ in Brodsky’s Main Essays” analyzes the concept of existence in Brodsky’s prose. “A Modern Fable of Atheism: on Jacobsen’s ‘The Plague in Bergamo’” investigates Jacobsen’s disenchantment of Christianity in “The Plague in Bergamo”.
3. Feminist studies: “The Wife of Bath’s Feminist Ideas: Limitations and Rebellions” examines the struggles of the Wife of Bath as a woman. “Writing

Emotions in the Mother-Daughter Relationship: Annie Ernaux's *A Woman's Story*" focuses on female emotional research in Ernaux's novel.

4. Study of classic literary phenomena: "Intertextual Techniques in *Lord of the Flies*" investigates various intertextual phenomena in *Lord of the Flies*, such as parody, archetype, symbolism, and reference. "A Study of the Dual-Layered Narrative Structure in Atsushi Nakajima's *The Moon Over the Mountain*" analyzes the dual-layered narrative structure in *The Moon Over the Mountain*.
5. Thematic research methods: "The Construction of Orphic Image through Water Imagery in Jean Cocteau's Orphic Trilogy" employs thematic analysis to explore the imagery of water, revealing the recreation of the Orpheus myth in Cocteau's dramas. "Light and Darkness in Saint-Exupéry's *Night Flight*" reveals the dialectical relationship between light and darkness as opposites and unities in Saint-Exupéry's classic work.
6. Mutual appreciation between Eastern and Western literature and thought: "Virginia Woolf's View of Self in *Mrs. Dalloway* and Mencius's 'Wan Wu' Proposition" interprets the self-realization of the protagonist in *Mrs. Dalloway* through Mencius's doctrine. "From *Daode Jing* to the *Earthsea Cycle*: Le Guin's Translation and Transformation of Daoist Thoughts" explores Le Guin's translation and development of Daoist thought in her works.

Linguistic papers strongly reflect the attention of young students to new media language such as the Internet, social networks, and media. For example, "Generation Mechanisms and Causes of Verbal Humor using Register Deviation: A Study of the Russian Stand-up Comedy *STANDUP*" investigates humor techniques in Russian stand-up comedy from a linguistic perspective. "What Happens when a Religious Icon Turns Digital: A Diachronic Approach to the Semantic Change of 'Icon'" analyzes the semantic changes of the word *icon* from its meaning in the past to its current application. "The Pragmatic Mechanism of Advising Acts in Cyberspace: A Case Study of 'Son Preference' on 'Zhihu' Platform" examines the discourse phenomena on social media regarding the topic of Son Preference. "Code-Switching Phenomenon among Young Chinese: An Interdisciplinary Analysis" utilizes a self-constructed corpus to analyze language code-switching among young people.

Furthermore, language testing and teaching research are significant focuses of the linguistic papers in this collection. "What Makes Chinese Secondary School German Teachers Feel Bad: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Emotions" explores the emotions of Chinese secondary school German teachers in teaching. "A Corpus-based Comparative Study on the Reading Text Difficulty of Two German Examinations: PGH and TestDaF" studies the difficulty of reading questions in two major German tests, PGH and TestDaF. "A Question of Questions - A Study on Chinese Students' Production of Wh-interrogatives with or without an Auxiliary Verb" examines Chinese students' structural competence in forming Wh-interrogatives. "The Shift of *-poi*: Where Morphology, Semantics, and Pragmatics meet" employs modality theory in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and *dentatsutaido* to study the suffix '*-poi*' in Japanese.

In the field of Translation Studies, there are both interdisciplinary studies on translation and linguistics, such as “Translation as a Medium of Language Contact: Evidence from Mandarin Semi-Affixes,” which reveals the impact of translation on the construction of semi-affixes in Mandarin. There are also studies on the thoughts of renowned translators, as seen in “A Study of the Translations and Translation Philosophy of Feng Zhi”, which investigates the translation philosophy of the translator Feng Zhi. In addition, there are analyses of the translation and dissemination of classic works abroad, such as “An Actor-Network Approach to English Translation of Su Wei’s *Invisible Valley*”, which uses Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to study the translation and dissemination of *Invisible Valley* in the United States. Traditional Chinese cultural translation has also been a recent research focus, as shown in “A Diachronic Study on the Translation of ‘道’ in Taoist Philosophy,” which explores the evolution of the concept of “Dao” in translation.

Papers in the Cross-Cultural and Area Studies category take language studies as their fulcrum, reflecting students’ interest in international current affairs, especially in Sino-foreign relations. For instance, “Sentiments and Attitudes Towards the Belt and Road Initiative in German-speaking Countries: An Analysis based on Twitter Data” analyzes Germans’ attitudes towards the Belt and Road Initiative through social media data. “The Construction of the National Image of China in *El Mundo*: Transitivity Analysis of the China-related Reports in the Last Five Years” examines the image of China in the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*. “Discourse Analysis of Russian and American Mainstream Media Regarding the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: TASS and CNN as examples” analyzes the metaphors used in the reports of the Russia-Ukraine conflict by both American and Russian media. “Celebrity Environmentalism on Social Media in China: A Critical Discourse Analysis” studies the discourse of internet celebrities on environmental protection topics. “Individual Engagement in Cultural Space Construction: A Case Study of Cultural Heritage Conservation in Daicun Village, Zhejiang Province” uses a village in China as an example to illustrate the importance of cultural space construction in cultural heritage conservation.

In summary, the 31 selected papers reflect the diverse academic interests of young scholars, a strong sense of interdisciplinary consciousness, concern for global issues and real-life problems, interest in new mediums like digital media, and thoughtful reflections on fundamental human inquiries. In recent years, in China, there has been considerable discussion in the educational and public spheres about how to redefine the positioning of foreign language disciplines under the current circumstances and how to endow them with the missions in the new era, aligning them with emerging trends.

This is not only a potential crisis for the legitimacy of foreign language disciplines, but also an opportunity for rethinking and renewal. Foreign language disciplines need to step out of their traditional boundaries, incorporate new methodologies and topics from other disciplines, while focusing on language and culture to explore how language can perform new functions within the context of renewed intellectual paradigms. We need to convey this innovative consciousness to our students, making them aware of the mission to advance the discipline from the very first day they enter university. Research training is

a crucial pathway for discipline creation and knowledge transmission. We hope that our modest efforts can contribute to nurturing future innovators in China's foreign language disciplines.

Professor Jia Zhao

Vice Dean, School of International Studies

Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Academic Conference and Proceedings Policy

Instructions for Conference Organization

Host University, Conference Chair and Committee Roles ASP primary goal is to support foreign universities for conference and symposium events. The host university organizers are responsible for sponsoring logistically to make sure the events can be held successfully. The conference chair is responsible for coordinating with the conference committee members and ASP publish staff to define aims and scope, delegate and monitor conferences -related work and to implement and advertise all programs and activities. Also, the chair will act as the primary contact person to answer publisher request, questions issues that concerns the conference or symposiums.

The programs, activities and responsibilities of the ASP designated staff and Conference Committee include the following:

- Monitoring the status the supported conferences and or symposium
- Monitoring the implementation of editorial policies and defined aims and scope
- Initiating workshops or mini-colloquia for new tread or areas of related subject
- Initiating workshops or mini-colloquia for new tread or areas of related subject
- Assisting to determine the data to be displayed and respective format of the Meetings-related information on the meeting website.
- Designed ASP staff will be attending Committee meeting, Email correspondence or use social media involvement in communication and event promotion.

Instructions for Reviewers

ASP relies on peer review to uphold the quality and validity of published articles. There are different types of peer reviews. We mainly practice single-blind peer review for proceedings articles. For the conference papers, reviewers review the full paper (not an extended abstract) before accepting the paper. A second round of comments are exchanged with the author after the paper is presented at the conference. Double-blind peer review is used for Journal articles. Articles can go through multiple rounds of reviews before getting accepted for publication.

For both journal articles and conference proceedings, the reviewers should always maintain a focus on the following aspects:

- The construct validity of the research or concept presented.
- Content relevance with respect to the topic of conference or the subject matter of the journal
- Discloser of sponsorship
- Relevance of citations

Reviewers should treat any manuscripts received for review as confidential documents. Reviewers should also review that submissions are formatted accurately according to the APA style required for the proceedings and that authors have acknowledged all sources of data used in the research.

Reviewers should conduct an objective review and provide feedback with supporting arguments that can help authors improve the quality of their papers. Prior to taking an assignment, or as early in the process as possible, reviewers should let the editors know if they cannot review the article and cannot meet the time requirements to complete the review process. Reviewers should not consider manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions connected to the papers.

Instructions for Proceeding Editorial Board

Proceedings editorial board and editor is responsible for evaluating manuscripts and make publication decision based on the academic merit of the submission, and on the recommendation of the conference or symposium reviewers. The evaluation will be based solely on the intellectual content of submissions and with a total disregard to race, gender, religious belief, ethnic origin, and political philosophy of the authors. The editors will strive to continuously improve the quality of publication to meet academic needs of the readers and authors. The editors will also maintain the integrity of academic development and will take required measures to respond to any complaints that may be presented regarding the publication.

Proceeding editors will proofread and edit each selected article and formatted in ASP proceeding format. For both journal articles and conference proceedings, editors should always maintain a focus on the following aspects:

- The construct validity of the research or concept presented.
- Content relevance with respect to the topic of conference or the subject matter of the journal
- Relevance of citations
- Discloser of sponsorship
- Adhere to the scholarly standards of authorship.

Instructions for Authors

The paper submitted for proceedings publication presented in a conference or symposiums presentation. Authors should be sure to appropriately acknowledge the work and/or words of others if referenced in the manuscript. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical publishing behavior and is not acceptable. Authors are obliged to provide retractions or corrections pointed out by ASP editors. All the authors listed as authors in the paper must have significantly contributed to the research. Authors are responsible for the authenticity of research data, for avoidance of conflict of interest, and for reporting to the editor any errors that they may discover in the published paper.

Conference proceedings can be incomplete works that report on an idea, technique, or important results, thus providing readers with a brief overview of recent work or specific projects of significant interest. The structure is similar to that of a standard research article, and it should

include sections such as an introduction, methods, results, conclusions, etc. It is recommended that the length should be from six to eight pages.

Preparation of Manuscripts

Word Processor and Format: We accept most word processor documents and word processing formats, but Word is the most preferred. If the file is not created in Word, we prefer you make a special note to the editor. It is important that the file be saved in the native format of the word processor used. The text should be in single-column format. Keep the layout of the text as simple as possible. Please try not to use special options to format the text or to hyphenate words. But you can use bold face, italics and underline.

Abstract, Keywords, and References

Abstract: A concise and factual abstract is required (maximum length 100 words). The abstract should briefly state the purpose of the research, the principal results and major conclusions. An abstract is often presented separate from the article, so it must be able to stand alone.

Keyword: Add three to five keywords to your article. Each keyword (which can be a phrase of more than one word) should describe one single concept. Often words like "and" or "of" should be avoided. Try not to use abbreviations unless an abbreviation is so well-established that the full term is rarely used.

References: APA style is used for references and in-text citations to the literature. Arrange the items on your reference list **alphabetically** by **author**, interfiling books, articles, etc. Indent the second and following lines 5 to 7 spaces or one half inch.

Publication Ethics

The American Scholars Press has established the guideline of ethical code for its proceeding publication. The guidelines apply to all parties involved: Authors, Editors, Reviewers, and the Publisher.

For Reviewers

Reviewers should treat any manuscripts received for review as confidential documents. Reviewers should also review that submissions are formatted accurately according to the APA style required for the proceedings, and that authors have acknowledged all sources of data used in the research. Reviewers should conduct an objective review and provide feedback with supporting arguments that can help authors improve the quality of their papers. Prior to taking an assignment, or as early in the process as possible, reviewers should let the editors know if they cannot review the article and cannot meet the time requirements to complete the review process. Reviewers should not consider manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions connected to the papers.

For Authors

Authors should only submit their original works for publication. Authors need to certify that the manuscript has not previously been published. Authors should be sure to appropriately acknowledge the work and/or words of others if referenced in the manuscript. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical publishing behavior and is not acceptable. Authors are obliged to provide retractions or corrections pointed out by reviewers and editors. All the authors listed as author in the paper must have significantly contributed to the research. Authors are responsible for the authenticity of research data, for avoidance of conflict of interest, and for reporting to the editor any errors that they may discover in the published paper.

For Editors

The editor of the *Proceedings* is responsible for evaluating manuscripts submitted by the conference and symposium organization committee on the basis of their academic merit on the recommendation of the peer reviewers. The evaluation will be based solely on the intellectual content of submissions and with a total disregard to race, gender, religious belief, ethnic origin and political philosophy of the authors. The editors will review all the papers and conduct necessary English editing and format the articles to meet the Style guide established by the Press. This is one of the strategies that strive to continuously improve the quality of publication to meet academic needs of the readers and authors. The editors will also maintain the integrity of academic development and will take required measures to respond to any complaints that maybe presented regarding the publication. The editors, reviewers and any editorial staff must not disclose any information about a submitted manuscript to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, potential reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher, as appropriate. Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript cannot be used in editor's own research without the written consent of the author.

Symposium Organization

Organizer and Host

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Academic Committee

Chair

Professor Jia Zhao, School of International Studies, Zhejiang University,
Hangzhou, China

Members

Professor Jun Xu, School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Professor Fan Fang, School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Professor Yuan Li, School of International Studies, Zhejiang University,
Hangzhou, China

Associate Professor Alita, School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou,
China

Associate Professor Yun Lu, School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou,
China

Associate Professor Miao Xu Yuan, School of International Studies, Zhejiang University,
Hangzhou, China

The Proceedings Editorial Committee

Professor Jia Zhao, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Ms. Lisa Hale Cox, American Scholars Press, USA

Professor Jin Zhang, American Scholars Press, USA

Professor John Lindsay, American Scholars Press, USA

Table of Contents

<i>Preface</i>	3
Studies of Linguistics	
What Makes Chinese Secondary School German Teachers Feel Bad: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Emotions <i>Fei Chen, Fei Lian</i>	16
The Pragmatic Mechanism of Advising Acts in Cyberspace: A Case Study of “Son Preference” on “Zhihu” Platform <i>Yijing Chen, Haitao Liu</i>	23
A Question of Questions – A Study on Chinese Students' Production of Wh-interrogatives with or without an Auxiliary Verb <i>Yangchenhui Liu, Yunqi Wang</i>	32
Code-Switching Phenomenon among Young Chinese: An Interdisciplinary Analysis <i>Jing Hu, Mengyang Yu</i>	38
The Shift of <i>-poi</i> : Where Morphology, Semantics, and Pragmatics Meet <i>Luqing Qi, Man Zhang, Wenchao Li</i>	46
Generation Mechanisms and Causes of Verbal Humor using Register Deviation: A Study of the Russian Stand-up Comedy <i>Standup</i> <i>Yue Wang, Qin Wang, Xin Lin, Ranran Xue</i>	59
A Corpus-based Comparative Study on the Reading Text Difficulty of Two German Examinations: PGH and TestDaF <i>Jingxi Yang, Yuan Li</i>	67
What Happens when a Religious Icon Turns Digital: A Diachronic Approach to the Semantic Change of “Icon” <i>Xinyin Zhang, Bin Shao</i>	77
Studies of Literature	
Justice Unveiled: Legal and Poetic Dimensions in von Kleist's <i>Michael Kohlhaas</i> <i>Can Cui, Xi Chen, Yongqiang Liu</i>	87
A Study of the Dual-Layered Narrative Structure in Atsushi Nakajima's <i>The Moon Over the Mountain</i> <i>Rungaoyuan Dong, Lita A</i>	95

A Study of the Idea of “Existence” in Brodsky’s Main Essays <i>Lintian Feng, Lei Jiang</i>	104
Intertextual Techniques in <i>Lord of the Flies</i> <i>Zihe Huang, Yanping Sun</i>	111
From <i>Daode Jing</i> to <i>The Earthsea Cycle</i> : Le Guin’s Translation and Transformation of Daoist Thoughts <i>Yu Jiao, Lei Du</i>	119
Virginia Woolf’s View of Self in <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> and Mencius’s “Wan Wu” Proposition <i>Shuiqingyun Liu, Fen Gao</i>	125
The Construction of Orphic Image through Water Imagery in Jean Cocteau’s <i>Orphic Trilogy</i> <i>Yuqi Liu, Yeting Shi, Yixin Zhang, Zongzong Pang</i>	134
The Ultimate Futility of the Bonfire of Reform and the Development of Ethical Sensibility in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s <i>Earth’s Holocaust</i> <i>Shuangning Lyu, Gexin Yang</i>	142
Light and Darkness in Saint-Exupéry’s <i>Night Flight</i> <i>Zongzong Pang, Jia Zhao</i>	149
Meteorological Vocabulary in <i>Doctor Zhivago</i> : Parts of Speech and Semantic Valency <i>Ruyi Ren, Miaoxu Yuan</i>	157
Indirect Communication in Jane Austen’s <i>Persuasion</i> <i>Chaoran Xing, Chen Su</i>	165
Writing Emotions in the Mother-Daughter Relationship: Annie Ernaux’s <i>A Woman’s Story</i> <i>Zhixin Yuan, Jia Zhao</i>	173
The Wife of Bath’s Feminist Ideas: Limitations and Rebellions <i>Zhiyue Zhang, Lian Zhang</i>	180
A Modern Fable of Atheism: on Jacobsen’s “The Plague in Bergamo” <i>Ai Zhong, Will Greenshields</i>	188
 Studies of Translation	
An Actor-Network Approach to English Translation of Su Wei’s <i>Invisible Valley</i> <i>Xinyi Luo, Qiaodan Lu</i>	195
Translation as a Medium of Language Contact: Evidence from Mandarin Semi-affixes <i>Zicheng Shao, Quangong Feng</i>	204

A Diachronic Study on the Translation of “道” in Taoist Philosophy <i>Shiyu Zhang, Quangong Feng</i>	213
A Study of the Translations and Translation Philosophy of Feng Zhi <i>Siqi Zhou, Yongqiang Liu</i>	220
Regional and National Studies and Studies on Cross-Cultural Communication	
The Construction of the National Image of China in El Mundo: Transitivity Analysis of the China-related Reports in the Last Five Years <i>Sunhua Gao, Xiao Yang</i>	228
Celebrity Environmentalism on Social Media in China: A Critical Discourse Analysis <i>Xinrong Jiang, Chenchen Zhu</i>	238
Discourse Analysis of Russian and American Mainstream Media Regarding the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: TASS and CNN as Examples <i>Runyi Li, Ranran Xue, Yu Qiu</i>	250
Individual Engagement in Cultural Space Construction: A Case Study of Cultural Heritage Conservation in Daicun Village, Zhejiang Province <i>Xiaoqi Lu, Jianping Yang</i>	257
Sentiments and Attitudes towards the Belt and Road Initiative in German-speaking Countries: An Analysis Based on Twitter Data <i>Xuan Zhou, Fei Lian</i>	266

What Makes Chinese Secondary School German Teachers Feel Bad: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Emotions

Fei Chen, Fei Lian*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3200102747@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] Since the year 2000, and particularly since the formal introduction of German language as a subject in secondary schools in China in 2018, the popularity of German language learning has been on the rise in China. The need for German teachers is increasing but little is known about the feelings that they experience. This study centers on Chinese secondary school German teachers, employing qualitative interviews to probe the types and causes of their negative emotions. The results imply that three main causes of teachers' negative emotions are unpleasant teaching experiences, burdensome management responsibilities, and bleak career prospects. We also examine the institutional and human factors that led to these unfavorable feelings, and offer recommendations for the professional development of secondary school German teachers in China.

[Keywords] language teacher emotions; Chinese German teachers; German language teaching

Introduction

Historically, foreign language education in China has been primarily centered around English. However, with the implementation of a multi-language policy in 2018, incorporating languages other than English, such as German, into the curriculum of Chinese secondary schools, the demand for German language instructors has increased. Previous research has predominantly concentrated on the emotional experiences of English teachers, leaving our understanding of secondary school German language instruction relatively underdeveloped. Secondary school German teachers, positioned as a marginalized collective, face numerous challenges and problems. While Lian, Li and Tao (2023) focused on the positive emotions experienced by Chinese secondary German teachers, it is essential to recognize that negative emotions are an integral part of their professional lives. Research has shown that the impact of emotions, both positive and negative, can significantly affect learning outcomes (Chen, 2020), and that paying attention to negative emotions is beneficial for creating a positive emotional atmosphere in the classroom. Therefore, this study sheds light on negative emotions to raise awareness and identify challenges faced by German teachers in Chinese secondary schools.

Language Teacher Emotions

Research into teacher emotions has established that teaching is inherently an emotionally charged endeavor (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000). However, it is noteworthy that emotional research in education was initially underacknowledged. Sutton and Wheatley argued that the term “emotional” had negative associations, often viewed as “destructive, primitive, and childish, rather than thoughtful, civilized, and adult” (2003, p. 328). Nevertheless, over time, an increasing number of studies have demonstrated the significance of teachers' emotions. MacIntyre, Gregersen and Mercer (2020) found that teaching is frequently listed as one of the most stressful professions, particularly for language teachers. According to Frenzel, Pekrun and

¹ Corresponding author. E-mail address: lianfei@zju.edu.cn

Goetz, “teachers’ emotions are critically important for the quality of classroom instruction, and they are key components of teachers’ psychological well-being” (2015, p. 1). Thus, paying attention to emotional factors can support the language teaching/learning process (Cowie, 2011).

In recent years, research on teacher emotions has gained momentum, encompassing various aspects, including the development of teacher emotion scales (Frenzel et al., 2016; Burić, Slišković & Macuka, 2018), the concept of emotional labor (Schutz & Lee, 2014), and the examination of specific categories of emotions, both positive (e.g., happiness, joy) and negative (e.g., anxiety, anger, sadness) (Liljestrom et al., 2007; Zhao, 2021). In terms of research methodology, the field of teacher emotions has evolved to encompass various research approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Wen & Zhang, 2017; Chen, 2020; Greenier, Derakhshan, & Fathi, 2021). However, the majority of studies have focused on English teachers, with limited attention to teachers of other foreign languages such as German. Additionally, the few studies on German language teachers have predominantly centered on university-level educators (Warner & Diao, 2022), overlooking the challenges faced by secondary school German language teachers. Given the unique complexities of the secondary school teaching environment, this study takes secondary school German teachers as its research subjects. Our specific questions include: (1) What negative emotions do Chinese secondary school German teachers experience? (2) What causes their negative emotions?

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study, with each teacher given a unique interview guide depending on the objectives of the study. The interview topics included the range of emotions teachers felt while teaching, factors causing negative emotions, and their views on their career prospects.

The Participants

The study included six (6) teachers from various types of secondary schools in China, ensuring diverse experiences and work environments. Their teaching tenures spanned from 2 to 12 years, during which they taught various types of courses, including National College Entrance Examination (NEMT) classes and first/second foreign language classes. Additionally, some participants held administrative roles. This diverse representation allowed for a broader exploration of the challenges faced by German teachers in secondary schools. Detailed participant information is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. *The Participant List*

Pseudonym	School type	Years of teaching experience	Administrative roles	Course types
A	Foreign language specialized	5	/	NEMT classes
B	Foreign language specialized	12	Head teacher	First Foreign Language / Study Abroad
C	International school	3	/	Study Abroad
D	International school	6	Management Leadership	First Foreign Language / Study Abroad
E	Non-foreign language specialized	2	/	Second Foreign Language
F	Non-foreign language specialized	3	Head teacher	First Foreign Language

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were conducted informally, fostering open conversations that enabled participants to freely discuss their experiences in response to our research questions. Probing follow-up inquiries were employed to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. The interviews, conducted individually, ranged from 30 minutes to one hour each, resulting in a total of approximately 250 minutes of audio recordings. These recordings were subsequently transcribed and analyzed using NVivo 20 software.

To ensure methodological rigor, the interview transcripts were coded following the grounded theory approach, comprising open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2017). This approach facilitated the identification and categorization of negative emotional experiences and their underlying causes among teachers. The first round of open coding entailed a comprehensive review of the interview transcripts. Content analysis was conducted to identify statements pertaining to teachers' unfavorable emotional experiences. These statements were subsequently divided into events, behaviors, and other factors that triggered negative emotional responses in teachers, ultimately yielding nine open codes.

Findings

The analysis revealed that the negative emotional experiences of the participants predominantly revolved around types such as disappointment, sadness, anger, confusion, and stress. Overall, the six participants mentioned a total of nine primary reasons for negative emotions, which can be categorized into three main aspects. Table 2 presents the coding outcomes of our study.

Table 2. *Frequency Analysis of Codes and Quotes of the Reasons from Semi-structured Interviews*

Themes	Codes	No. of quotes	No. of participants (n=6) reporting this reason
Unpleasant Teaching Experiences	Inappropriate learning attitude of students	18	6
	Issues with online classroom equipment	4	3
	Teachers' personal performance	1	1
Limited Promotion Pathways and Unclear Career Prospects	Being undervalued and marginalized	4	3
	Lack of professional development opportunities	8	6
	The absence of platforms for sharing teaching resources	5	3
	Lack of conducive research environment	1	1
Burdensome Administrative Responsibilities	Complex interpersonal relationships	2	1
	Demanding workload arising from management positions	5	3

Unpleasant Teaching Experiences

The majority of the negative emotional experiences stemmed from teaching and learning situations. During the interviews, our participants frequently cited their teaching experiences as a primary source of negative

emotions, accounting for approximately 50% of their emotional responses. These emotions, including disappointment and anger, often originated from student reactions, challenges related to teaching equipment in the context of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, and individual performance concerns.

Most of the participants reported that inappropriate learning attitudes exhibited by students triggered emotions of anger or sadness. Specific student behaviors contributing to teachers' negative emotional experiences were highlighted during the interviews. For instance:

- (1) *Just this morning, I was already a bit annoyed because there's a student in our class who consistently submits very unclear photos for their assignments. I asked him to resubmit them. Although he agreed, he still didn't finish it in this morning. When I called on him, he refused to turn on his camera, which made me even more frustrated. Usually, when I get angry, it's probably because they're not very engaged in class. (F)*
- (2) *Last week, I realized that we had four assignments due this week. One student only completed one of the tasks, which made me quite upset. (C)*

The excerpts illustrate that teachers' emotional experiences are significantly influenced by the feedback they receive from students. Behaviors such as disengagement in learning and uncooperative attitudes often lead to feelings of frustration and anger among teachers.

As mentioned earlier, during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022, a significant number of teachers gained experience with online teaching. Some participants mentioned that disruptions and technical issues with online teaching tools contributed to their negative emotions.

- (3) *Online teaching intensified the sense that some students couldn't keep up, and that made me quite upset. When it came to conducting classes, sometimes the equipment would freeze or crash, which resulted in a really unpleasant experience. (F)*
- (4) *During the pandemic, my mental state actually hit rock bottom twice because everything was so different – the teaching environment, the way I interacted with students, and so on. (D)*

Another factor in this aspect is teachers' personal performance or their own professional requirements. Teacher F mentioned her own negative experience:

- (5) *Actually, what affects me the most is sometimes after class, when I feel that I didn't teach the lesson very well, I get upset and angry. I start to think that it might be because I didn't prepare the lesson adequately. (E)*

Importantly, it's worth noting that all teachers indicated that, despite possibly feeling bad due to student performance and related factors in the teaching process, they do not bring these emotions into the classroom to ensure their teaching effectiveness, which reaffirms the findings of Taxer and Gross (2018) on teacher emotion regulation.

Limited Promotion Pathways and Unclear Career Prospects

Apart from teaching experiences, the majority of participants also referenced their frustrations related to promotion pathways and career prospects. For example, half of the participants (Participants A, B, F) stated that, as German language teachers, their subject is not given as much weight at the school level. National teacher training and competitions specific to German are scarce, and in many regions, there is not even a dedicated teacher qualification for teaching German. Consequently, German teachers often find themselves needing to acquire English teaching qualifications, exacerbating their feelings of disappointment.

- (6) *For instance, the lack of teaching research platforms, including insufficient teaching resources and materials, unlike the English subject, where there are organized resources available. (F)*

(7) *In other words, there's no guarantee behind our promotion pathway because I don't even have a teaching qualification for German. (D)*

(8) *English teachers often have exchange activities and various competitions – we don't have those. After a few years, some who started their career with you at the same time might have already made progress, and even teachers who joined later could surpass you in terms of professional titles. (A)*

Similar to Participants A and D, more than half of the participants (Participant A, B, D, E) feel confused and disappointed because of the lack of promotion pathways. According to Participant E, the lack of opportunities for professional development and research further dampened their career prospects.

(9) *Research is quite beneficial for your future career development, but in reality, our field is relatively niche, making it challenging to pursue research. (E)*

The above narratives indicate that the absence of personal development opportunities, platforms for sharing teaching resources, and a conducive research environment all hinder the professional growth of secondary school German language teachers, consequently diminishing their sense of professional well-being. This dearth of growth opportunities indicates a need for improved support for German language teachers within China's educational system.

Burdensome Administrative Responsibilities

As secondary school teachers, half of the participants (Participants B, D, F) also hold teaching management responsibilities. Some serve as teacher in charge of a class, while others take on leadership positions in administration. Compared to others, they often experience more pronounced levels of stress. The sources of their stress can be attributed to two main aspects: interpersonal relationships and job-related pressures.

Administrative responsibilities often cause teachers in management roles increased stress. Their time spent preparing lessons was frequently cut short by these obligations, which frustrated them.

(10) *I generally enjoy teaching, but what bothers me is, for instance, when it comes to management roles, I often have meetings and then need to handle a lot of things after those meetings. This significantly eats into my lesson preparation time, making me feel like I haven't adequately prepared for that class. (D)*

Moreover, handling the parent-student relationship presented additional emotional difficulties, especially when handling impatient personalities. As the head teacher, participant B experiences frustration in this progress.

(11) *Some parents are impatient and direct, which makes communicating with them emotionally draining. Consequently, my own emotions often deteriorate. (F)*

As the narrative suggests, the more intricate interpersonal relationships and demanding workload arising from management positions pose greater challenges for German language teachers.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study focused on the negative emotional experiences of teachers teaching German in Chinese secondary school and investigated the types and underlying antecedents of these emotions. The results of Lian et al. (2023) show that German teachers in China experienced more positive emotions than negative ones, and their positive emotions primarily stem from positive interactions with students and opportunities created by the development of the German subject. Compared to their research, we concentrated primarily on negative emotions, as they are an inevitable aspect of teaching and have a significant impact on teachers'

well-being and found that: (1) Both positive/negative emotions of teachers primarily stem from their positive/negative interactions with students, which indicates that teachers' emotions are largely influenced by their relationships with students. (2) Lian et al. (2023) reported that teachers with more development opportunities often come from foreign language-focused schools in cities where German teaching is rapidly growing. They enjoy greater support from their schools and collaborate with university professors and teachers involved in setting German curriculum standards, enabling them to more readily identify new opportunities. In contrast, the participants in our study face different circumstances, as their schools generally do not prioritize teaching of German. This indicates that the changes brought by curriculum reform are gradually emerging, thus focusing on negative emotions can help to raise awareness and identify problems for German teachers in our secondary schools. According to the results, German teachers may feel sad, angry, disappointed, confused and stressed during their work.

The negative emotional experiences may be attributed to multiple factors. Firstly, our findings indicate that teachers predominantly encounter negative emotions stemming from their challenging teaching experiences. These experiences include students' lack of enthusiasm towards learning German, teachers' dissatisfaction with their own teaching outcomes, and the added inconveniences introduced by new teaching tools within the context of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic, which aligns with the findings of Lorie (1975), who reported that when asked to assess the outcomes of their own teaching, teachers referred to feelings of inadequacy and failure, together with anger towards their students.

Secondly, another predominant theme among the participants is their discontentment with their career prospects. They indicate a lack of promotion pathways. Historically, emotional research concerning language teachers has shown a lack of attention to German teachers. Fried, Mansfield and Dobozy (2015) mentioned high rates of teacher attrition due to excessive stress and poor emotion management in their study. Our participants mentioned that, in comparison to English teachers, they encounter even fewer promotional opportunities, resulting in increased pressure and diminished professional well-being.

Thirdly, we discovered that headteacher and other managerial responsibilities brings teachers of German language more stress. These teaching management responsibilities likely interfere with their time to prepare lessons. MacIntyre et al. (2020) also mentioned that excessive administrative obligations, including the maintenance of positive student teacher-parent rapport makes teachers feel stressed,

The aforementioned findings and conclusions make it clear that school authorities and society should provide more support to secondary school German teachers, such as establishing communication platforms, organizing national teacher training, competitions, and other initiatives, in order to promote their career development. Our study also calls for more research into the challenges faced by German teachers in China and seeks to foster increased support for their professional growth. In the future, longitudinal studies of a larger sample size will be needed to gain a deeper understanding of this group.

References

- Burić, I., Slišković, A., & Macuka, I. (2018). A mixed-method approach to the assessment of teachers' emotions: Development and validation of the Teacher Emotion Questionnaire. *Educational Psychology, 38*(3), 325-349.
- Chen, J. (2020). Teacher emotions in their professional lives: Implications for teacher development. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 48*(5), 491-507.
- Cowie, N. (2011) Emotions that experienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers feel about their students, their colleagues and their work. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 27*(1), 235- 242.

- Frenzel, A. C., Becker-Kurz, B., Pekrun, R., & Goetz, T. (2015). Teaching this class drives me nuts! - Examining the person and context specificity of teacher emotions. *PLoS One*, *10*(6), e0129630.
- Frenzel, A. C., Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Daniels, L. M., Durksen, T. L., Becker-Kurz, B., & Klassen, R. M. (2016). Measuring teachers' enjoyment, anger, and anxiety: The Teacher Emotions Scales (TES). *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *46*, 148-163.
- Fried, L., Mansfield, C., & Dobozy, E. (2015). Teacher emotion research: Introducing a conceptual model to guide future research. *Issues in Educational Research*, *25*(4), 415-441.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2017). *Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge.
- Greenier, V., Derakhshan, A., & Fathi, J. (2021). Emotion regulation and psychological well-being in teacher work engagement: A case of British and Iranian English language teachers. *System*, *97*, 102446.
- Hagenauer, G., Hascher, T., & Volet, S. E. (2015). Teacher emotions in the classroom: associations with students' engagement, classroom discipline and the interpersonal teacher-student relationship. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *30*, 385-403.
- Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *16*(8), 811-826.
- Lian, F., Li, Y., & Tao, J. (2023). The emotions of teachers teaching German in Chinese secondary schools. *Porta Linguarum* (In print).
- Liljestrom, A., Roulston K., & Demarrais, K. (2007). "There's no place for feeling like this in the workplace": Women teachers' anger in school settings. *Emotion in Education*, pp. 275-291.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2020). Language teachers' coping strategies during the Covid-19 conversion to online teaching: Correlations with stress, wellbeing and negative emotions. *System*, *94*, 102352.
- Schutz, P. A., & Lee, M. (2014). Teacher emotion, emotional labor and teacher identity. In *English as a foreign language teacher education*. Brill, pp. 167-186.
- Sutton, R., & Wheatley, K. (2003). Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review*, *15*(4), 327-358.
- Taxer, J. L., & Gross, J. J. (2018). Emotion regulation in teachers: The "why" and "how". *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *74*, 180-189.
- Warner, C., & Diao, W. (2022). Caring is pedagogy: Foreign language teachers' emotion labor in crisis. *Linguistics and Education*, *71*, 101100.
- Wen Q., & Zhang H. (2017). Listening to the voices of young college English teachers: A qualitative study. *Foreign Language Teaching*, *38*(01): 67-72.
- Zhao, H. (2021). Positive emotion regulations among English as foreign language teachers during COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 807541.

The Pragmatic Mechanism of Advising Acts in Cyberspace: A Case Study of “Son Preference” on “Zhihu” Platform

Yijing CHEN, Haitao LIU*

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3210102638@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] “Son preference” is a cultural issue in China, which has led to a series of online advising acts. This paper adopts quantitative and qualitative research methods to analyze 110 online suggestions with the theme of son preference. The study examines the syntactic and discourse representations of online suggestions, revealing their implementation forms and the changes in cultural pragmatic features. The results show that: firstly, online suggestions related to son preference issue are similar to other general online suggestions in the syntactic dimension, but differ in the discourse dimension; secondly, in the further example-based argumentation, the implementation forms of online suggestions can be divided into three categories, showing empathy and directness characteristics; and thirdly, the cultural pragmatic characteristics of online advising acts have gradually deviated from the Confucian concepts of harmony, being more influenced by feminism, and have shifted from conforming to the collective to pursuing individual independence.

[Keywords] online advising acts; son preference; pragmatic mechanism; cultural pragmatic characteristics

Introduction

An advising act (Austin, 1975) refers to the speaker’s provision of their views or opinions through suggestive language at the appropriate time, which enables the listener to move towards a more positive direction while still leaving room for choices and decisions (Shen & Liu, 2012). With the popularity of online social platforms, research on online advising acts has gradually emerged in recent years.

As for the current research of online advising acts, Western scholars have mainly focused on the perspectives of language structure, conversation structure, cross-culture, and pragmatics. Locher (2006) conducted a systematic examination of online suggestions and found that they include multiple discursive moves, which can be classified as judgment, personal experience (empathy), evaluation, and suggestion. For language structure, scholars usually referred to Searle’s (1969) speech act theory framework and found that sentence structures such as declarative sentences and interrogative sentences appear frequently in online suggestions (Locher, 2006; Morrow, 2006, 2012; Harrison & Barlow, 2009). Additionally, some scholars focus on the implementation forms of advising acts (Decapua & Huber, 1995; Hudson, 1990; Martine-Flor, 2010), based on the CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project) model proposed by Shoshana, B. K. et al. (1989). Later, Western research entered the field of pragmatics, with interpersonal pragmatics as a representative perspective. Placencia’s (2012) research showed that suggesters use personal experiences, evaluations, and other discursive moves to implement affiliation strategies to establish good interpersonal relationships with the questioners. Harrison and Barlow (2009) found that online suggesters often use politeness strategies to avoid threatening the face of the questioners, and the most common way is to show empathy towards their situation through personal experience narratives. However, Western scholars’ research in this field is limited to the speech act theory framework

* Corresponding author, Email address: htliu@163.com

(Ran & Lei, 2022), or using politeness theory (Harrison & Barlow, 2009), and research in pragmatics is limited to interpersonal pragmatics (Placencia, 2012).

Domestic scholars have mainly studied online advising acts from a pragmatic perspective. Mao and Huang (2016) used qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine the implementation forms of the Chinese online advising acts and their gender representations. Ran and Lei (2022) explored the cultural pragmatic characteristics of online advising acts. The former lacks specific research due to its broad research content, while the latter has limitations in exploring the changes of online advising acts behind the cultural pragmatic perspective as times change and concepts evolve.

“Son preference” has long been a cultural issue in China, which refers to a cultural preference for male children over female ones, leading to gender discrimination and inequality. Nevertheless, theories related to “feminism,” and “gender equality” have developed rapidly in recent years and have had a huge impact on this cultural issue. Therefore, this paper aims to adopt qualitative and quantitative research methods (Mao & Huang, 2016) based on specific corpus data of 110 online suggestions concerning son preference on the “Zhihu” platform. The representations and the implementation forms of online advising acts, and the changes in cultural pragmatic characteristics will be identified. Finally, the paper attempts to derive more effective pragmatic mechanisms through example-based argumentation.

This paper mainly attempts to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the representations of online advising acts related to son preference?
- (2) What are the implementation forms of these online suggestions?
- (3) What changes have occurred in the cultural pragmatic features?

Methodology

Through theme sampling, the paper searched for the original corpus of online suggestions using keywords and phrases such as “parents preferring sons over daughters”, “son preference”, “what to do”, and “how to do” on the platform, and obtained 18 advice-seeking questions and 3,906 suggestion answers, forming the original corpus based on the “question-suggestion” pattern. In the further selection of the corpus, referring to the research framework of Harrison and Barlow (2009) and Mao and Huang (2016), the qualified corpus should follow the two criteria: (1) advice-seeking questions and suggestions with two or more positive responses (as shown by the number of likes); (2) “question-suggestion” content containing “1 question + 3 or more answers”. Furthermore, duplicate corpus content was removed, and examples that were difficult to discern or unclear were also excluded to ensure that the corpus was solely advising acts. Ultimately, this paper has collected a total of 110 online suggestions, and each contained 3 or more sentences.

The study applied quantitative analysis to make statistics on the frequency of online advising acts in syntactic and discourse dimensions by analyzing sentences individually. Based on these indicators, qualitative analysis was applied to identify the implementation forms with specific examples, and changes in cultural pragmatic features of online suggestions. Finally, the pragmatic mechanism of online advising acts concerning son preference was established.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of Representation of Online Advising Acts

The representations of advising acts include five types of syntactic forms: declarative sentences, imperative sentences, rhetorical questions, interrogative sentences, and phrases (Eisenchlas, 2012). Based on Mao and Huang's (2016) framework, declarative sentences are subdivided into five subcategories shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequency of Representations of Online Advising Acts under Syntactic Categories*

Analysis Dimension		Syntactic Subcategories	Frequency		
Syntactic Dimension	Declarative Sentence	Simple present tense	112	177	
		Present tense (with the modal verb)	21		
		Future tense	9		
		Present tense indicating evaluation	10		
		Conditional sentence	25		
	Imperative Sentence	Positive imperative sentence	14	23	
		Negative imperative sentence	9		
	Rhetorical Question	Rhetorical advice	7	7	226
	Interrogative Sentence	Interrogative questions or suggestions	8	8	
Phrase	Incomplete language structure	11	11		

According to Table 1, the representations of online advising acts under the syntactic categories are composed of declarative sentences (78.3%), imperative sentences (10.2%), phrases (4.9%), interrogative sentences (3.5%), and rhetorical questions (3.1%). This is different from the syntactic distribution frequency of online advising acts in English language contexts analyzed by Eisenchlas (2012), who found that imperative sentences accounted for 71%, followed by declarative sentences (24%), phrases (4%), and interrogative sentences (1%). This difference may be due to the “high-context” nature of the Chinese language (Linell, 2001).

Further examination of syntactic subcategories showed differences between declarative and imperative sentences, which are the main syntactic forms of online advising acts. Among them, declarative sentences with simple present tense are the major subcategory of declarative sentences (63.2% of declarative sentences and 49.6% of the total), followed by conditional sentences (14% of declarative sentences and 11% of the total), declarative sentences with modal verbs (11.9% of declarative sentences and 9% of the total), declarative sentences indicating evaluation (5.6% of declarative sentences and 4% of the total), and declarative sentences marked by future tense (5% of declarative sentences and 4% of the total). In the subcategory of imperative sentences, the frequency of positive imperative sentences (60.9% of imperative sentences and 6% of the total) is higher than that of negative ones (39.1% of imperative sentences and 4% of the total).

In addition, this study analyzed the discourse dimension to explore the pragmatic mechanism behind online advising acts. The discourse dimension refers to how speakers tend to use verbal communication, which includes eight types (Mao & Huang, 2016), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Frequency of Different Representations of Online Advising Acts under Discourse Categories*

Analysis Dimension		Discourse Subcategories	Frequency	246
Discourse Dimension	Direct Suggestions	Make personal suggestions directly	82	
	Evaluative Discourse	Evaluation of the behavior of questioners	3	
	Explanatory Discourse	An explanation of the problem	63	
	Shared Experiences Narratives	Describe the same experience	7	
	Personal Experiences Narratives	Describe one's experience	85	
	Empathetic Discourse	Show sympathy through nicknames, etc.	3	
	Relieving Responsibility	Refuse to be responsible for the advice	3	
	Transferring Responsibility	Advising questioners to seek help from experts in the relevant fields	0	

According to Table 2, the suggesters mainly adopt the forms of direct suggestions (33.3%) and personal experiences narratives (34.6%), followed by explanatory discourse (25.6%), and shared experience narratives (2.9%), while evaluative discourse (1.2%), empathetic discourse (1.2%), and discourse relieving responsibility (1.2%) have similar frequencies. And there is no occurrence of discourse transferring responsibility.

In contrast to the results of general online advising acts research in the discourse dimension, suggesters mainly use a combination of personal experience narratives, direct suggestions, and explanatory discourse to provide suggestions for the questioner. Meanwhile, from the syntactic dimension analysis, the selected corpus is consistent with the data results obtained by Mao and Huang (2016) on the syntactic distribution. Hence, the existing pragmatic mechanism of general online advising acts (Mao & Huang, 2016) fails to explain such online advising acts of distinctive cultural issues as for discourse dimension, the main discourse structure of which is the combination of “personal experience narratives”, “direct suggestions”, and “explanatory discourse”.

Implementation Forms of Online Advising Acts

In response to the questioner's negative emotions derived from son preference, this study found that when implementing suggestions, online suggesters often use the discourse strategy of narrating personal experiences (Harrison & Barlow, 2009) to support their suggestions. Since it has been found that “personal experience narratives”, “direct suggestions”, and “explanatory discourse” are the three main forms of discourse in online suggestions, further analyses as to how online suggesters implement suggestions will be carried out through specific examples.

Previous studies have found that the online advising sequence of son preference generally consists of two parts: suggesters' elucidation and suggestions. According to the content of the elucidation, the implementation forms of online advising acts have three types: “elucidation-explanatory discourse + suggestion”, “elucidation-corrective discourse + suggestion”, and “elucidation of Confucian ethics + suggestion” (Ran & Lei, 2022). It is worth mentioning that traditional Chinese Confucianism has been employed in the analysis of online suggestions, emphasizing the blood relationship between parents and children and indicating the children's responsibility to their parents. In the case of son preference, previous research focused on suggesters' discourse transferring responsibilities caused by son preference to the questioner, ignoring their empathy process with the questioner. Therefore, this theoretical framework proposed by Ran and Lei (2022) is inadequate for the contemporary implementation forms of son preference. By contrast, this study found that the implementation forms used by online suggesters related to son preference nowadays focus more on empathy with the questioner, mainly through narrating their own

experiences. Under this circumstance, this study proposes a more effective framework for the implementation forms based on the previous data analysis. According to different discourse contents, the implementation forms can be grouped into the following three categories: “personal experience narratives + explanatory discourse + direct suggestions”, “personal experience narratives + direct suggestions”, and “personal experience narratives + explanatory discourse”. Moreover, the language strategies became more “personalized” as suggesters tend to narrate their experiences which derive from what they once personally practiced.

(1). Personal experience narratives + explanatory discourse + direct suggestions. By applying “personal experiences narratives”, suggesters demonstrate similar life experiences with the questioner, making their advice credible and empathetic. This provides emotional support and guidance to the questioner (Mao & Huang, 2016). Since explanatory discourse refers to the clarification of the conditions that cause a certain event or the reasons for people’s behavior (Ning, Dániel, & Chen, 2020), the suggester first narrates similar encounters with the questioner based on personal experiences and then provides advice through explanatory discourse and direct suggestions.

Example 1: My parents also have a son preference. My brother is seven years younger than me, and I was often told that I needed to be accommodating to him. If there is something that we both like to eat, my mother will always give it to my brother. There are countless similar situations. For son preference, it’s something you can’t change. You may feel trapped, upset, jealous, and always have a grudge, but the only thing you can do is focus on yourself, work hard, and live a good life. I think it’s more reliable to rely on yourself, and save money. You need to save money, save money, and save money.

In this example, the suggester first briefly described her experience of facing son preference by comparing her own life with that of her brother. Next, she used explanatory discourse to introduce the advice content (“For son preference, it’s something you can’t change...the best you can do is...”). Explanatory discourse can provide additional information for advice content that the questioner cannot escape from son preference. Therefore, the suggester immediately used constraining language to provide advice by following the coherence of speech (“the only thing you can do is...”). Finally, the suggester provided direct advice (“I think it’s more...and save money”). It should be noted that the suggester repeatedly emphasized “save money”, using the “need to” structure to provide prescriptive advice (Martínez-Flor, 2005), and further stressed the previous explanatory advice, making the entire advice process more complete.

(2). Personal experience narratives + direct suggestions. After the online suggesters elaborate on their personal experience, they directly provide advice to the questioner. Given the special nature of the corpus, where the questioner and suggester are mainly women, previous studies have shown that women tend to give direct suggestions or provide emotional support and guidance to the questioner by describing their own experiences (Mao & Huang, 2016). Waring (2012) also noted that women emphasize the directness and emotional content of their advice.

Example 2: My family holds a traditional belief. My father thinks that my brother is more important not only because he can carry on the family line but also because he can take care of his parents when they get old. My brother dropped out of high school and only got a menial job, whereas my sister and I chose to pursue education, but my father perceives us as being lazy, unproductive, and spending the most money. He frequently reminds us

that everything in this family will belong to our brother and that we shouldn't expect anything. I hope that every girl can be independent and self-reliant and, there will still be beautiful things happening in life.

In this example, the suggester used personal experience narratives (“My family...my father thinks that having a son...and my sister and I...spending the most money”) to demonstrate her father’s markedly different attitudes towards her and her brother, presenting the culture of son preference. Meanwhile, the online suggester used direct speech to reproduce what her father had said to her (“Everything in...anything.”) to further corroborate her point. By sharing similar experiences, she provided a certain degree of justification for the validity of her subsequent advice, increasing its credibility. In this example, the suggester used the implementation form of direct suggestions to the questioner (“I hope every girl can be...”). The suggester used the third person pronoun (“every girl”) to directly advise the questioner to “be independent and self-reliant”. She then gave best wishes to the questioner (“...beautiful things happening in life”), strengthening the achievability of the advice and attempting to paint a bright future for the questioner, thus providing the maximum emotional support.

Example 3: My parents have an extreme son preference. I was left at my grandmother's house from when I was very young while my younger brother was always kept close by their side. They never considered me and only cared about my brother. They always gave him meat to eat, and when I tried to eat a little, my father would stare at me, which made me very scared, so I didn't dare to eat. Another heartbreaking thing was that my mother told someone that my brother couldn't find a wife, but luckily, I could give him money to get married. Every time I see other parents being kind to their children, I feel envious. Unfortunately, I can't change the fact that I have parents like this, so I will try my best to stay away from them. I suggest you work hard, stay away from them, and just provide them with the necessary support.

The suggester first described her experience of her parents’ different attitudes toward her and her brother and expressed her negative emotions such as “scared”, and “heartbreaking”. She also emphasized dissatisfaction with the word “envious”. The suggester implemented direct suggestions in two specific forms. The first was using the first-person pronoun “I” to imply the choices she made in similar situations. The second was directly addressing the questioner in a dialogue, which is a typical form of direct suggestions that applies the suggestion verb “I suggest you”. A similar effect can also be achieved by using the suggestion noun “my suggestion” (Martínez-Flor, 2005).

In both examples, there were minor differences in the suggesters’ personal experience narratives because the online context makes the content more colloquial, and differences in narrative styles are inevitable. The specific forms of direct advice implemented by online suggesters mainly include three types. The first is to advise all the women, which is an implicit way of advising (“I hope every girl...”). The second is to imply the questioner with their coping strategies (“I will try to...”). The third is to use suggestion verbs or nouns, such as “I suggest you”.

(3). Personal experience narratives + explanatory discourse.

Example 4: My family is in a situation of son preference. Since I was young, I was always told to be accommodating to my younger brother. If there was an apple, my mother would never split it evenly between us, but give it all to my brother. Whenever we argued, my parents would always hit me. I used to feel upset about this, but later I realized that it's

impossible to change the deep-rooted son preference. The only thing you can do is to adapt to it and stay away from it. You need to love yourself, be independent, and break away from your original family. It's best to take things lightly and move forward. So, my dear, cheer up!

In this example, the suggester first described her personal experiences through comparison and direct narration. Then, she introduced the advice of “The only thing you can do...” by applying explanatory language such as “it’s impossible to change the deep-rooted son preference”. The suggester then provided the questioner with more feasible advice using positive imperative sentences. It can be seen that the suggester used both positive and negative suggestions, first using words such as “adapt”, and “stay away”, which have a certain negative connotation in this context, and then providing positive and affirmative suggestions (“You need to love yourself, be independent, and break away from your original family.”). Finally, the suggester used empathetic language such as “So, my dear, cheer up!” to express sympathy and encouragement to the questioner.

The Changes in Cultural Pragmatic Features in Online Advising Acts

Among previous studies, only Ran and Lei (2022) approached the issue of son preference from a cultural pragmatics perspective and argued that, within the context of Chinese culture, the pragmatic features of online suggestions are closely related to the Confucian ethics of family responsibility. The way of suggestions is influenced by Confucian culture and has distinctive local and cultural characteristics. Under the influence of Confucianism such as “benevolence”, “filial piety”, and “family harmony”, online suggesters tend to explicitly or implicitly deny the viewpoint of son preference mentioned by the questioner and generally recommend a conciliatory approach to resolving conflicts (Ran & Lei, 2022). However, through the data analysis and example-based argumentation presented, online suggesters are no longer justifying son preference due to the increasing popularity and acceptance of feminist ideas. People are inclined to adopt a positive attitude and their advice tends to be more assertive and direct. This study also finds that online suggestions have already deviated from traditional Chinese Confucianism, shifting from emphasizing concepts of “filial piety” and “family” to modern feminist thought, and the conclusion that Ran and Lei (2022) reached overemphasizes the role of Chinese traditional value but ignores the impact of modern ideas on this cultural issue.

Firstly, the implementation forms are based on the principles of gender equality and equity. “Gender equality” means that men and women have equal life opportunities and no differences in intelligence and ability; “gender equity” means opposing the patriarchal world and eliminating women’s experiences of inequality and injustice. Hence, parents should treat each child equally instead of showing a preference for their son. Accordingly, when suggesters describe their personal experiences, they often compare how their parents treat them differently from their brothers, which is to express the idea that son preference violates the principle of gender equality and the equal rights that both genders should enjoy. Suggesters affirm and support the experiences of the questioner who has suffered from son preference by describing their own experiences, refusing to justify their parents’ behaviors. Expressions like “My parents also have a son preference” are intended to support the viewpoint of the questioner facing son preference. Additionally, suggesters use degree adverbs to emphasize the severity of son preference, such as “extreme son preference”. Therefore, when implementing specific suggestions, online suggesters advocate opposing son preference and refuse to defend its rationality.

Furthermore, online suggesters present the idea of women's autonomy, which means that women should strive for self-respect, self-love, self-awareness, and self-reliance, and become independent and free from the traditional dependence on patriarchy (Narayan, 2002). Suggestions, such as "be independent and self-reliant", reflect the modern feminist idea of independence and autonomy. In addition to directly advising questioners to "be independent" and "be self-reliant", the idea of autonomy is also reflected in the suggesters' direct suggestions that the questioner should leave the original family, such as "to break away from the original family". It can be seen that the suggestions in response to son preference no longer focus on the collective or the family harmony, but emphasize the importance of the individual.

Conclusion

This paper presents a quantitative and qualitative study on the pragmatic mechanisms of Chinese online advising acts in the context of son preference. It analyzes and compares the syntactic and discourse dimensions of these suggestions with those in real-life contexts and other online contexts. Furthermore, the implementation forms of online suggestions are analyzed and studied, and the cultural pragmatic changes of these suggestions are summarized. The results show that: firstly, in the syntactic dimension, the advising acts of son preference are consistent with those in other Chinese online contexts and real-life contexts, whereas different from those in English online contexts. Secondly, in the discourse dimension, unlike other online advising acts, the suggestions for son preference emphasize the combination of personal experience, direct suggestions, and explanatory discourse. Thirdly, the implementation forms can be classified into three categories: "personal experience narratives + explanatory discourse + direct suggestions", "personal experience narratives + direct suggestions", and "personal experience narratives + explanatory discourse", focusing more on empathy with the questioners through narrating personal experiences. Finally, the study finds that online suggestions have gradually deviated from traditional Chinese Confucian cultures, and the idea of feminism becomes the basis and guidance for online advising acts, shifting from the pursuit of collective harmony to independence.

References

- Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to do things with words*, (Vol. 88). Oxford University Press.
- Shoshana, B. K., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies. *Grazer Linguistische Studien*, pp. 349-356.
- DeCapua, A., & Huber, L. (1995). 'If I Were You...': Advice in American English. *Multilingua*, 14(2), 117-132.
- Eisenclas, S. A. (2012). Gendered discursive practices on-line. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 44(4), 335-345.
- Harrison, S., & Barlow, J. (2009). Politeness strategies and advice-giving in an online arthritis workshop. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 5(1), 93-111.
- Hudson, T. (1990). The discourse of advice giving in English: "I wouldn't feed until spring no matter what you do". *Language & Communication*, 10(4), 285-297.
- Linell, D. (2001). *Doing culture: Cross-cultural communication in action*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Locher, M. A. (2006). *Advice online: Advice-giving in an American internet health column*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Martínez-Flor, A. (2010). Suggestion: How social norms affect pragmatic behavior. In Alicia Martínez-Flor & Esther Usó-Juan, (eds.) *Speech Acts Performance: Theoretical, Empirical and Methodological*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Martínez-Flor, A. (2005). A theoretical review of the speech act of suggesting: Towards a taxonomy for its use in FLT. *Revista alicantina de estudios ingleses, No. 18 (Nov. 2005)*, 167-187.
- Mao, Y. & Huang, Q. (2016). A study on the pragmatic mechanism of advising in cyberspace. *Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies, 179(03)*, 102-112.
- Morrow, P. R. (2006). Telling about problems and giving advice in an internet discussion forum: some discourse features. *Discourse Studies, 8(4)*, 531-548.
- Morrow, P. R. (2012). Online advice in Japanese: Giving advice in an Internet discussion forum. *Advice in Discourse, 221*, 255-279.
- Narayan, U. (2002) Minds of their own: Choices, autonomy, cultural practices and other women. In L. Antony, & C. Witt, (eds.), *A Mind of One's Own. Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 418-432.
- Ning, P., Kádár, D. Z., & Chen, R. (2020). Evaluation of explanation in interaction. *Modern Foreign Languages, 43(02)*, 161-173.
- Placencia, M. E. (2012). Online peer-to-peer advice in Spanish Yahoo! Respuestas. *Advice in discourse, 221*, 281-305.
- Ran, Y., & Hou, H. (2009). A pragmatic account of implicit repairs in interpersonal conflicts. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 41(06)*, 403-409+480.
- Ran, Y., & Lei, R. (2022). A cultural pragmatic study of the speech act of online advice. *Foreign Languages Research, 39(02)*, 7-13.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Shen, Z., & Liu, W. (2012). A pragmatic study of the speech acts of psychological counselors' advising behaviors. *Foreign Language and Literature Studies, 29(01)*, 6-12.
- Yu, G. (2009). A conversational analysis of suggestion-seeking/suggestion-giving sequence in prenatal consultation. *Journal of Foreign Languages, 32(01)*, 58-62.
- Waring, H. Z. (2012). The advising sequence and its preference structures in graduate peer tutoring at an American university. In H. Limberg & M. A. Locher, (eds.), *Advice in Discourse. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company*.

A Question of Questions – A Study on Chinese Students’ Production of Wh-interrogatives with or without an Auxiliary Verb

Yangchenhui Liu, Yunqi Wang^{*1}

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3210105477@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] It is an intriguing phenomenon that English textbooks for Chinese students introduce Wh-interrogatives without auxiliary verbs earlier than those with auxiliary verbs. To find out which type of Wh-questions, those with auxiliary verbs or those without, is easier for Chinese students to produce, a paper-and-pen test was conducted. The results show that Wh-questions without an auxiliary are less challenging for Chinese students. This finding is also supported by the tendency to transform Wh-questions with an auxiliary verb into those without an auxiliary. These results have important implications for second language teaching, suggesting that increasing exposure to Wh-questions with auxiliaries and prioritizing teaching subject-auxiliary inversion may benefit Chinese students’ acquisition of Wh-questions.

[Keywords] Wh-questions; auxiliary verbs; word-form error; word-order error; sentence type transformation

Introduction

“*What’s your name?*” “*What’s this?*” “*How many birds are there?*” Without an auxiliary, these are the first three questions in the English textbook of People’s Education Press for students in Primary 1. (“Be” in the above examples constitutes main verbs, and it is an auxiliary only when there is another main verb in the sentence according to the Collins Dictionary) However, questions like “*What does he look like?*” first appear in the textbook of the same set for students in Primary 2. Another popular English language textbook—*New Concept English*—shows the same tendency. “*What make is it?*” is the first Wh-question in this book, as a title of Lesson 6. One can’t spot a Wh-question with an auxiliary verb until “*How do you do?*” appears as the title of Lesson 17.

The above two instances seem to point out that in second language acquisition, Chinese students are expected to master Wh-questions without an auxiliary verb first, after which they come to learn Wh-questions with an auxiliary. Some may argue that “*What’s your name?*” is universally recognized as the most fundamental question in English, and it is natural to place this Wh-question on the earlier pages of the textbooks. But the questions like “*How many birds are there?*” and “*What make is it?*” seem less common in English daily talks, which are less applicable than a question with an auxiliary like “*How do you do?*”. Nevertheless, textbook editors still endow Wh-questions without an auxiliary verb with a privilege, allowing them to appear earlier. Thus, this paper aims to present explanations for this phenomenon in second language teaching.

Literature Review

Scholars have done certain studies concerning auxiliaries in Wh-interrogatives. In 1984, Erreich found out native English children made errors in forming questions as they failed to understand the rule of subject-auxiliary inversion. The study of Villiers & Roeper (1995) which was to see whether the relative clauses were barriers for young children in wh-movement corresponded to this. They attributed the occurrence of

* Corresponding author. Email address: longluck@zju.edu.cn

children's subject-auxiliary inversion errors to their failure in applying complicated grammatical rules. However, different from these rule-based researchers, some believed children's acquisition of wh-inversions is determined by their exposure frequency to "wh-words + auxiliary" collocations (Rowland & Pine, 2000). These scholars suggested that "multiple exposures give the child multiple opportunities to attend and parse the input, allowing the child to collect data about the form's function." (Valian & Casey, 2003).

While there is some substance in both accounts, recent studies on EFL learners' performance have provided more evidence for the former claim. In 2003, Hyeson observed that children learning English as their L1 or L2 apply do-insertion (S-Aux inversion) gradually in wh-questions beginning with argumental wh-questions and spreading to adjunct wh-questions. Hattori (2004), who investigated EFL learners in Japan, has similar findings. By conducting both input study and experimental study, Lee (2004) also concluded that there is an argument/adjunct asymmetry in the acquisition of subject-auxiliary inversion in wh-question and this asymmetry is the result of the structure-based generative approach rather than lexical-based input frequency approach. The above studies directly or indirectly backed rule-based argument since they all reveal that mastering grammar rules to deal with syntactic complexity is one key factor affecting EFL learners' performance of wh-movement. Thus, the researcher of this study supports a rule-based approach.

For Chinese learners, the structure-based generative approach rather than lexical-based input frequency approach also stands as what Wat Lok Sze & Josephine (2006) figure out. Scholar Xiaorong Zhang (2016) further ascribed these grammatical errors in wh-questions to negative transfer from Mandarin, over generalization and developmental factors. For example, direct word-to-word translation from Mandarin gives rise to sentences like "When show begin?" and sentence like "When baby birth?" is typically an over generalization generated by learners with low proficiency level.

Although there are studies dealing with Chinese acquisition of Wh-questions, few have subdivided Wh-questions into questions with and without auxiliaries. The rule-based approach indicates argument wh-questions like *what*, *who* and *where* were first acquired because they are relatively simple syntactically (Bloom, Merkin and Wotten, 1982). However, it is not clear whether wh-questions are "simple syntactically" or not. Without gauging "syntactic complexity" with a concrete parameter, previous researchers equated wh-questions to wh-questions with auxiliaries, overlooking that argument wh-questions like *what* and *who* can be introduced without an auxiliary. Furthermore, few studies focused on students whose first language is Mandarin. Thus, the present study subdivides Wh-questions into questions without auxiliaries and questions with auxiliaries, aiming at assessing Chinese students' performance in producing these two kinds of Wh-interrogatives. In doing so, the researcher of this study expects to inform English teaching for ESL learners in China.

Method

To achieve the goal shown above, the researcher first specifies the research question as "Which kind of Wh-questions is easier for Chinese students to produce, questions without an auxiliary verb or questions with an auxiliary verb". "Easier" here refers to a higher accuracy. The researcher then hypothesizes that wh-questions without auxiliaries are easier for Chinese students to produce. The hypothesis is made based on the researcher's understanding of the cognitive learning process of second language learners, and the speculation regarding the varying degrees of interference from the first language (Chinese) in these two types of wh-questions.

Participants

Forty students from junior two participated in the paper-and-pen test. The reason for not choosing primary school students as subjects is that they may fail to produce meaningful answers since their exposure to English is not sufficient. The reason for not recruiting senior high and college students is that higher-level English learners may handle Wh-questions so well that one cannot expect to detect which kind of Wh-questions is easier for these second language learners to produce. Therefore, students from junior high are optimal subjects. On the one hand, till junior two, almost all the existing versions of English textbooks have exposed Chinese students to eight kinds of Wh-words, for which students at this age should have mastered the production of all kinds of Wh-questions. On the other hand, junior high school students are far from being proficient in their second language, so they are prone to make mistakes while producing Wh-questions.

Materials

In the paper-and-pen test, 16 declarative sentences were given each with a constituent underlined, and participants were asked to frame eight pairs of wh-questions with the underlined part as the answer. Differences in underlined parts of the same declarative sentence gave rise to the wh-question with or without auxiliaries. To avoid the “the more words written the more errors revealed” dilemma, the two types of questions that participants were asked to frame should be equal or almost equal in their numbers. Thus, the answers to 8 out of the 16 test items were wh-questions without an auxiliary, while the other half, with an auxiliary verb.

The distribution of the test items ranged from simple to complex. Two different types of interrogatives were generated based on one declarative sentence to ensure that two kinds of wh-questions were framed within the same context. For example, “Mary eats an apple” were the first and second test items, with “Mary” and “an apple” underlined respectively. The correct answers for these two are “*Who eats an apple?*” and “*What does Mary eat?*”. Test items 3-4 differ from test items 1-2 in that the Wh-word *What* introduces a Wh-question without any auxiliary while the Wh-word *Who* introduces one with an auxiliary verb. To further exclude the effect of wh-word selection, each pair of questions in Test items 5-12 were introduced by the same Wh-word respectively. For instance, “Heavy rainfall” and “a flood” were underlined in the fourth declarative sentence on the test paper—“Heavy rainfall causes a flood.” The expected answers are “*What causes a flood?*” (Test item 7) and “*What does heavy rainfall cause?*” (Test item 8) correspondingly. Test items 13-16 are similar to previous items except that they are more difficult considering more words are involved.

Overall, the words used are relatively simple and the test covers only simple present tense and simple past tense. The whole set of the test can be seen in *Appendix A*.

Coding and Analysis

Appendix B shows the whole set of the scoring guidelines. Each answer is attributed a score of 0, 0.5, or 1, which stands for correct, partially correct, and wrong, respectively. An answer scored “1” if it was accurate or with one or a few minor mistakes like misspellings, omission of words, and misuse of articles. An answer scored “0.5” if an error arose in its predicate, the essential part of a sentence. Errors, such as a mistake in verb tense or misuse of active and passive voice, will degrade the whole sentence severely. When the content verb and the auxiliary verb were both incorrect in a Wh-question with an auxiliary verb, they only counted as one mistake, getting a score of “0.5”. In this way, two kinds of Wh-questions were scored

unbiasedly. An answer scored “0” for being incomprehensible, adopting an erroneous Wh-word, or incorporating a syntactically unacceptable word order. Two defining features of a Wh-interrogative are its question format and its Wh-word. Thus, whether the sentence’s word order conforms to that of a question, and whether the sentence’s Wh-word is appropriate matter most.

Each answer from the 40 participants was scored, and an average score was calculated for each participant. Then, the researcher marked the error type of those “partially-correct answers” and “wrong answers”, endeavoring to measure the frequency of different kinds of errors in Wh-questions with and without auxiliary verbs. Errors with high frequency are categorized into two main types—errors in word forms and errors in word order. The former consists of mistakes spotted in a word’s unit, such as incorrect verb use and erroneous adoption of the wh-word. The latter incorporates mistakes found in a sentence’s unit, which refers primarily to unacceptable word order of a sentence. Lastly, the researcher detects a phenomenon of transforming sentence types from Wh-questions with auxiliaries to those without auxiliaries in several test items and counts the number of its occurrences. All data are imported to SPSS for further analysis.

Results and Discussion

Performance on Two Types of Wh-questions

The average score of Wh-questions without auxiliary verbs is 0.84, while that of Wh-question with auxiliary verbs is 0.71. Participants were more accurate on Wh-questions without an auxiliary verb ($M = 0.84, SD = 0.17$) than those with an auxiliary verb ($M = 0.71, SD = 0.27$), $t(39) = 4.72, p = .000$.

Difference in Error Types

To figure out what kinds of errors these two types of Wh-questions are prone to and their odds of occurrence, a Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between question type and error type. Results show that the two variables—Error Types and Question Types—were associated with each other, $X^2(1, N = 160) = 16.93, p < .001$. The likelihood of errors in word-forms occurring in both question types was 49.5% and 50.5% respectively. Errors in word-order were disproportionately associated with Wh-questions having auxiliaries (96.0%).

This suggests that errors in word forms do not explain Chinese students' lower accuracy in Wh-questions with auxiliaries, despite the fact that this question type imposes higher requirements on students to master word forms. These requirements include inflecting verbs such as *do* and selecting Wh-words from a wider range, such as *When, Where, Whom, and Why*. Meanwhile, Wh-questions with auxiliaries require subject-auxiliary inversion, which introduces syntactical complexity, often leading to word-order errors. In contrast, while framing a Wh-question without auxiliaries, participants could repeat words from the declarative sentence without changing their orders.

Tendency to Transform Sentence Types

Another interesting finding is that Chinese students tended to transform Sentence Types. For instance, participants were expected to output “*Who does John run after?*” in Test item 6. However, 7 of them resorted to a Wh-question without an auxiliary verb, i.e., “*Who runs before John?*”. Intrigued by this observation, the researcher located 4 test items where transformation phenomenon occurred (a total of $4 \times 40 = 160$ answers) and analyzed them. 91.3% of the transformation occurrences were with Wh-questions with auxiliary verbs while 8.7% of them were with Wh-questions without auxiliary verbs (see Figure 1). A

chi-square test of independence shows that there was a significant relationship between Sentence Types and Transformation, $X^2(1, N = 160) = 6.7, p < .001$.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that Chinese students demonstrated greater ease in producing Wh-questions without an auxiliary verb compared to questions with an auxiliary. This suggests that the presence of auxiliary verbs posed a challenge. These findings have important implications for second language teaching, recommending increased exposure to Wh-questions with auxiliaries and paying greater attention to subject-auxiliary inversion instruction. Incorporating these insights into language instruction would help enhance students' acquisition of Wh-questions and overall language development.

Further investigation could be done based on the third finding of this study. Since only 4 of the 16 test items allow for transformation, future studies can design questions whose correct answers can be either Wh-questions without auxiliaries or Wh-questions with auxiliaries to see whether it is universal that students tend to transform Wh-questions with auxiliary verbs into Wh-questions without auxiliary verbs.

References

- Bloom, L., Merkin, S., & Wooten, J. (1982). "Wh"-Questions: Linguistic factors that contribute to the sequence of acquisition. *Child Development*, 1084-1092.
- De Villiers, J., & Roeper, T. (1995). Relative clauses are barriers to wh-movement for young children. *Journal of Child Language*, 22(2), 389-404.
- Erreich, A. (1984). Learning how to ask: Patterns of inversion in yes-no and wh-questions. *Journal of Child Language*, 11(3), 579-592.
- Hattori, H. (2004). The acquisition of wh-movement by Japanese advanced learners of English. *Dissertation Abstracts International, C: Worldwide*, 65, 3, 584-C.
- Lee, S. Y. (2004). Argument/adjunct asymmetry in the acquisition of inversion in wh-questions by English-speaking children and Korean learners of English: Frequency account vs. structural account. *Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences*, 64, 10, Apr, 3664-A-3665-A.
- Lee, S. Y. (2008). Argument-adjunct asymmetry in the acquisition of inversion in wh-questions by Korean learners of English. *Language Learning*, 58(3), 625-663.
- Rowland, C. F., & Pine, J. M. (2000). Subject-auxiliary inversion errors and wh-question acquisition: 'What children do know?'. *Journal of Child Language*, 27(1), 157-181.
- Valian, V., & Casey, L. (2003). Young children's acquisition of wh-questions: The role of structured input. *Journal of Child Language*, 30(1), 117-143.
- Wat, L. S. (2006). Cantonese-speaking students' handling of wh-questions in English. HKU Theses Online (HKUTO).
- Zhang, X. (2016). A study on the acquisition of English wh-question by Chinese beginning learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(8), 1578.

Appendix A: the Paper-and-Pen Test

Task: Frame Wh-questions to get the underlined part as an answer.

e.g. Doris loves studying English. Answer: Who loves studying English?
 Lucy keeps her money in the bank. Answer: Where does Lucy keep her money?

1. Mary eats an apple.
2. Mary eats an apple.
3. A heart attack happened to him.
4. A heart attack happened to him.
5. John runs after Anna.
6. John runs after Anna.
7. Heavy rainfall causes a flood.
8. Heavy rainfall causes a flood.
9. The red car is better than the black car. (Form a question that includes the Wh-word “Which”)
10. I like the black car, not the red car. (Form a question that includes the Wh-word “Which”)
11. Tracy’s cat is lovely.
12. Jane lends my bicycle to Frank twice a week.
13. Jane lends my bicycle to Frank twice a week.
14. Jane lends my bicycle to Frank twice a week.
15. Kate wanted to go to school yesterday because she missed her teachers and classmates.
16. Kate wanted to go to school yesterday because she missed her teachers and classmates.

Appendix B: Scoring Guidelines

Each answer is attributed a score of 0, 0.5, or 1, which stands for wrong, partially correct, and correct.

Score	Criteria
1	The answer is basically correct, allowing for: Misspelling or omission of words; Misuse of articles/prepositions Errors in Noun-Number; Substitution of content words with pronouns
0.5	The answer is partially correct in that errors arise in the essential part of a sentence—predicate. For example, Mistakes in verb tense, Mistakes in active and passive voice * When the content verb and the auxiliary verb are both incorrect in a Wh-question with an auxiliary verb, they only count as one mistake, getting a score “0.5” rather than “0”.
0	The answer is wrong, if it has the following errors: Wrong choice of wh-word Complete misunderstanding of the sentence Incorrect syntactic structure (a serious reversal of word order)

Code-Switching Phenomenon among Young Chinese: An Interdisciplinary Analysis

Jing Hu, Mengyang Yu*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: carol.jing.hu@live.com

[Abstract] The phenomenon of code-switching, which involves multiple languages in discourse, has gained prominence due to evolving education in China. This study examines the use of code-switching among young Chinese individuals aged 20 to 40 by exploring interactions between language competency, culture and linguistic context. A self-built corpus constituted from Wechat chat texts and RED posts in various social scenario was used to reveal characteristics of different age groups, ranging from cognitive processing to choose of wording replacements.

[Keywords] Code-switching, bilingualism, language dominance, discourse analysis

Introduction

Code-switching, as a linguistic phenomenon, entails the practice of deploying multiple languages within the confines of a single communicative exchange. However, it remained on the periphery of scholarly attention until the seminal contributions of Shana Poplack's pioneering research (1980) which laid the foundation for the study of code-switching. Since then, research in the field of code-switching has provided valuable insights into various aspects of this linguistic behavior, including types of code-switching, sociolinguistic factors influencing code-switching, grammatical rules governing code-switching, code-switching in bilingual and multilingual communities, neurolinguistic aspects involved in code-switching, code-switching and language policy, etc. A great number of languages had been studied in the past decades. For the Chinese language, code-switching in Chinese-English bilinguals (in Hong Kong and Singapore), in Mandarin and dialects, in multilingual Chinese communities (such as parts of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines), in educational contexts, are the key areas of study related to code-switching.

Considering the social dynamics, Li and Milroy (2007) examined sociolinguistic motivations and language variation in code-switching among Chinese-English bilingual communities. Additionally, Zhou and Wei (2007) furthered this exploration, emphasizing the significance of context and identity in shaping code-switching patterns. Todd Sandel and Peimin Qiu (2020) explored code-switching in Chinese-English bilingual Wechat texts and highlighting its impact on identity construction for young Chinese located in Macau and Zhuhai. In educational contexts, Chen T. P. (2019) researched the code-switching phenomenon in Chinese middle schools, Hamzeh and Jianbo Chen (2022) furthered through a pedagogical perspective among Chinese undergraduate students who learn English as a foreign language.

Despite comprehensive examinations of code-switching related to the Chinese and English languages, to our knowledge, young Chinese mainland individuals who are educated or who work in Western countries have not yet been examined in previous research on code-switching. This article endeavors to address this void in the existing body of research, with a specific emphasis on comprehending the contemporary patterns

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: mengyang.yu@hotmail.com

of code-switching among young Chinese individuals in online communication, and by focusing on the grammatical aspects, sociolinguistic motivations, and cognitive factors behind code-switching.

Methodology

Corpus Construction

The content retrieval and analysis of the online chat texts have been conducted with the consent of the participants. The analysis draws upon three self-constructed distinct corpora as its foundation:

Corpus	Subject	Age	Profession	Birthplace	Language Competency
1	A	22	Student	Mainland CHN	Native in English and Chinese
	B	21	Student	Mainland CHN	Native in English and Chinese
2	C	31	Employee	Mainland CHN	Native in Chinese, English as a working language
	D	28	Employee	Mainland CHN	Native in Chinese, English as a working language
3	Random RED users	/	/	/	Native in Chinese, English as a second language

The first records texts in WeChat chat history between a researcher and two acquaintances in the same age group with the same profession; the second collects WeChat chat history between a researcher and two acquaintances in the same age group with the same profession; the third records article titles from a particular social platform.

In Corpus 1 and Corpus 2, the four subjects chosen are all Chinese, despite having grown up in different language contexts. They are meticulously chosen to form contrast groups. The differentiation stems primarily from their language acquisition backgrounds. While Speaker A and B are bilingual, native in both Chinese and English (in short, bilingual ni2), Speaker C and D, however, exhibit bilingualism but are native only in Chinese (in short, bilingual ni1). Their professions are also considered as control factors.

Corpus 1 / set	Subject	Start recording time	End recording time	Word count ²
Set A1	A	Dec. 1, 2022	Dec. 18, 2022	2,000
Set A2	A	June. 29, 2022	Jul. 10, 2022	2,000
Set B	B	Oct. 1, 2022	Dec. 4, 2022	2,000

Corpus 1 comprises three sets: Set A1, Set A2 and Set B. Each set adheres to a standardized word count of 2,000 per interaction, capturing the exclusive discourse of the participants and excluding the researcher's contributions. This meticulous approach ensures a focused examination of the participants' linguistic expressions.

Subject A and B, both in their 20s, are originally from China. They have pursued education in the UK since the age of 14. Therefore, texts collected in the first group predominantly unravel in everyday life contexts. It's also worth noting that in the first group, A's social circle comprises mostly foreigners, in sharp contrast to B, whose interactions are primarily within a Chinese-centric environment.

Corpus 2 / set	Subject	Start recording time	End recording time	Word count
Set C	C	Nov. 17, 2022	Dec. 14, 2022	2,000
Set D	D	Sept. 21, 2022	Oct. 26, 2022	2,000

² A standardized word count measures each Chinese character or each English word as 1 count.

Corpus 2 is made in the same way as is done for Corpus 1; each set comprises a word count of 2,000. Additionally, subject C and D in the second group are employed by foreign companies in China, specializing respectively in business management and marketing. Thus, texts collected from the second group are primarily within work-related scenarios.

Corpus 3 / set	Subject	Start recording time	End recording time	Word count
Set E	RED random posts	Dec. 29,2022	Dec. 29, 2022	2,200

Corpus 3 is made in order to better extend the findings of the first corpus to common individuals. It is made up of titles extracted from random posts on RED (a Chinese social platform). Collected on December 29, 2022, this corpus offers a unique insight into linguistic trends inherent in title construction within the platform’s context. To eliminate personalization bias, the researcher intentionally closed the recommendation algorithm on this app, refreshed the page at random intervals and thus collected a corpus of titles totaling 2200 words from an unbiased browsing experience.

According to the study’s findings, code-switching behavior exhibits variation based on the level of language education and the specific communicative context. The following article will commence by analyzing the characteristics of code-switching usage among bilinguals native in two languages (bilingual ni2) and then analyze that which occurs among bilinguals native in only one language (bilingual ni1).

By conducting systematic comparisons of these corpora, insightful conclusions are drawn regarding distinct conversational patterns, contextual nuances, and professional affiliations. These meticulous comparisons constitute a pivotal aspect of this study’s approach, facilitating an in-depth exploration of code-switching dynamics across linguistic and situational dimensions.

Data Analysis

This article combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of code-switching. Through examining the frequencies for code-switching use in different scenarios and doing comparative statistical tests among different contrast groups, the analysis has looked into this code-switching phenomenon from a quantitative perspective. By analyzing the contents and socio-cultural contexts, proposing hypothesis and conducting interviews to verify qualitatively afterwards, the article is thus able to figure out the hidden motivations behind the code-switching patterns. Despite the limited corpus collected in the current research stage, this data can to some extent reveal the characteristics of code-switching among young Chinese individuals. Future research will focus on expanding the scope of data collection.

Results

Inter-Sentential and Intra-Sentential Switching Among Young Chinese

This part demonstrates an overview of the difference in code-switching phenomenon between bilinguals with different language backgrounds by analyzing the frequency and patterns of inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching among bilingual ni2. Data is drawn from Sets A1, A2 and B in Corpus 1.

Through careful statistical scrutiny, a significant revelation comes to light: bilingual ni2 exhibit a higher tendency towards inter-sentential switching compared to their counterparts ni1. Particularly, within bilingual conversations, a considerable 4.475% of spoken words showcase inter-sentential switching, a marked contrast to the complete absence of such phenomena within bilingual ni1’s conversations.

It is intriguing to note, however, that bilingual ni1 demonstrate a diminished inclination for intra-sentential switching. Only a mere 1.72% of the bilingual ni1 corpus presents intra-sentential switches, in contrast to a relatively higher proportion of 2.75% observed within the bilingual ni2's context.

Therefore, be it inter-sentential or intra-sentential code-switching, bilinguals native in 2 languages and while living in a foreign culture context tend to unconsciously modify their linguistic expressions to mirror the cultural and linguistic milieu with which they engage. This finding resonates with the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) introduced by Howard Giles (1991), which lends empirical support to the theory's assertion.

Code-Switching Among Bilingual ni2

This part delves deeper into the frequency of code-switching usage categorized by word parts of speech. The examination involved tallying the instances of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and conjunctions in Sets A1, A2, and B. Through the conducted analysis, it has been determined that code-switching behaviors within this group are influenced by both cognitive processes and language dominance.

The influence of cognitive process on code-switching. Cognitive factors, such as lexical availability and syntactic compatibility, could have a varied impact on bilinguals with different language backgrounds. The statistics of Corpus 1 reveals that bilingual ni2 utilize more logical conjunctions and inter-sentential phrases, which serves as a consequence of the influence of cognitive process.

As for the logical conjunction usage, among the total of 47 intra-sentential words, 21 are English logical conjunctions and subordinators, encompassing terms like “which,” “also,” “but,” and “hence.”

*Example 1: 我们去的时候他们送了我们 (wǒmen qù de shíhòu tāmen sòng le wǒmen)
free welcome drink which is 味增汤还有 (wèi zēng tāng hái yǒu) free champagne*

Translation: When we were there, they gave us free welcome drink which is miso soup and free champagne.

In cases of inter-sentential interactions, speakers often structure their language according to the English pattern.

Example 2: but by the end of 晚饭 (wǎnfàn) we're significantly more 熟 (shú) than 中午我们刚见面的时候 (zhōngwǔ wǒmen gāng jiànmiàn de shíhòu)

Translation: But by the end of dinner, we're significantly more familiar with each other than at noon when we first met.

Whether employing logical conjunctions or engaging in inter-sentential transitions within extended sentences, recipients can discern the influence of English cognitive processes in speakers' expressions. This is particularly evident in instances involving subordinate and comparative structures, both of which are absent in Chinese grammar.

The influence of language dominance on code-switching. The influence of language dominance could easily be sensed with former exemplifications. In Examples 1 & 2, their choice of code-switching shows not only different cognitive processes but also a subconscious hierarchy of languages among international students. Their speech exhibits English as the dominant language, with Chinese assuming a secondary role. Nevertheless, this phenomenon undergoes a transformative process as the prevalent linguistic surroundings change. The corpus has adequately documented a contrasting group. For subject A, Set A1 was meticulously curated during subject A's academic semester abroad, while Set A2 was compiled during subject A's stay in China. Upon an in-depth analysis of Set A2, a conspicuous shift came to the

forefront: The frequency of English logical conjunctions, in comparison to the overall tally of intra-sentential transitions, exhibited a significant decrease – declining from 44.68% to 36.71%.

Furthermore, by analyzing the descriptive terminology within the subjects, it is clear that discourses adapt to the linguistic backdrop. These terms serve to precisely delineate contextual situations. For instance, subject A, immersed in an environment with a higher concentration of English speakers, deploys adverbs, adjectives, and verbs with frequencies of 6, 4, and 5 times respectively.

Example 3: 我只是 (Wǒ zhǐshì) note down 一些 (yīxiē) vaguely 值得 (zhídé) comment on 的事 (de shì)

Translation: I'm just noting down something vaguely worth commenting on.

However, for subject B, who has a greater exposure to Chinese surroundings, the respective counts are 4, 2, and 5, depicting a lower frequency compared to subject A. This observation suggests that bilingual individuals tend to engage in heightened cognitive processing within the dominant language of their immediate linguistic milieu.

Another notable discovery revolves around the deployment of euphemistic noun substitutions by bilingual participants. Within a pool of 24 nouns utilized by subjects A and B, 29.17% are employed as euphemistic replacements. This category encompasses terms such as “protest” or nouns denoting political matters. Participants employ these euphemistic words strategically to indicate their proximity or distance from specific subjects or events, reflecting an element of divergence. This inclination can be attributed to the fusion of their original Chinese cultural values and the influences of their upbringing. Their maturation process was marked by the collision of these cultural realms, leading to a conscious adaptation in their linguistic choices. Particularly in topics that amplify ideological contrasts, they lean toward expressing themselves in the language corresponding to the alternative cultural context. This linguistic maneuver serves a dual purpose: averting suspicion and embracing their heightened comfort in addressing such matters in an alternate language.

Code-Switching Among Bilingual n1

In a broader context, the phenomenon of code-switching from Chinese to English emerges distinctly in the speech of bilingual n1. This part adapts the same method to the second corpus by counting the frequencies of code-switching categorized by words part of speech.

Among those employed within foreign enterprises in China, code-switching constitutes a mere 1.9% of their spoken content. Similarly, for users of domestic social platforms, code-switching encompasses 1.8% of their conversational expressions in everyday interactions. Despite these seemingly modest percentages, a cohesive trend surfaces among young Chinese individuals, indicating a consistent inclination towards its utilization.

Within diverse discourse contexts, distinct patterns materialize in the way young Chinese individuals engage in code-switching.

Code-switching in professional contexts. Within work environments, employees employ mostly intra-sentential switching, often involving word substitutions encompassing nouns, adjectives, and verbs. These usages reflect the predominant position of English in Chinese business world and the emerging trend of Chinese language’s trying to replace English in the same milieu.

When examining the detailed figures, code-switching involving nouns occurs at an average frequency of 8.5 instances per 1,000 words. These instances frequently involve business management terminology, spanning areas such as company sector divisions (e.g., agency, marketing), internal structural divisions (e.g.,

manager, executive, business unit), operational systems (e.g., package, award), and job-related content (e.g., research, viewership, hypothesis).

Code-switching in adjectives is observed at a rate of 8 occurrences per 1,000 words. These adjectives are primarily employed for straightforward descriptions, often delineating the outcomes of tasks or personal mood.

Example 4: 我知道他们在这个点不够 (Wǒ zhīdào tāmen zài zhège diǎn bùgòu) strong

Translation: I know they're not strong enough at this point.

Example 5: 那只能用上一个项目的东西了 (Nà zhǐ néng yòng shàng yīgè xiàngmù de dōngxi le) so sad

Translation: I'll have to use things from the last project, so sad.

Verbs are employed in code-switching at a frequency of 8.5 instances per 1,000 words. These verbs are tailored to the domain of business management and include terms like “collaborate,” “align,” and “empower.” It’s worth highlighting a significant trend where some of these terms are progressively undergoing direct translation into Chinese, such as “对齐” (duìqí) and “赋能” (fùnéng). This phenomenon, initially prominent within domestic technology companies, is now extending to foreign enterprises operating within China.

Therefore, as is foreshadowed, several implications emerge from the aforementioned statistics. Firstly, while Chinese-to-English code-switching is common in professional contexts, its application remains predominantly superficial. These instances lack inherent linguistic depth, serving descriptive rather than grammatical structural purposes.

Secondly, the integration of code-switched vocabulary has elevated these terms into industry jargon, enabling companies to erect both internal and external industry barriers, thereby enhancing their professional reputation. The utilization of such vocabulary instills confidence in customers, reinforcing their trust in the quality of products and services offered by the company.

Lastly, while English once enjoyed dominance within the professional sphere, there is a gradual resurgence of the Chinese language. The discipline of business management originally emanated from foreign origins, endowing English with a prominent role. With the gradual influx of foreign companies into the Chinese market, their influence has markedly shaped the local business landscape, fostering the widespread use of business-related terms, even within domestic entities.

Nevertheless, with China’s rapid economic growth in recent decades, domestic companies have been crafting distinctive business management paradigms, gradually diminishing the centralizing role of the English language in their operations. Though these endeavors are in their preliminary stages and often entail direct translations that may not be entirely seamless, the trajectory towards reducing the centralization of the English language is unmistakable.

Code-switching in daily life and social platforms. Within the realm of social platforms, code-switching has gained popularity among young Chinese. Code-switching phenomenon for this group exhibits an urge for them to be considered well-educated, professional and trustworthy, especially on online social platforms.

Zero in on figures. Among 150 randomly selected RED post titles, instances of intra-sentential switching are observed in 9 titles, while tag switching appears in 27 titles. The high appearance of tag switching finds its rationale within the intricate dynamics of social platforms. These platforms consist of content creators and content receivers, with a significant overlap between these two roles. The measure of

content success is often gauged by the number of views, owing to its quantifiable and direct nature. To secure a higher viewership, content creators must tailor their offerings to align with the preferences of their audience. These shared preferences often revolve around practical guides and real-life experiences. Fulfilling these preferences necessitates content creators to not only present themselves with a professional and dependable image, characterized by attributes like overseas experience or a specialized background, but also requires their content titles to be both appealing and concise.

In consequence, code-switching needs to effectively cater to both these requirements. It serves as a demonstration of content creators' adeptness in both Chinese and English, signifying not only their linguistic prowess but also an underlying implication of their education, affluence, and thus, trustworthiness.

Example 6: 咨询民工 (zīxún míngōng) | 2023 resolution

Translation: Working in consulting industry | 2023 resolution

Example 7: 我要向全世界的懒人安利 (wǒ yào xiàng quán shìjiè de lǎnrén ānli) top sheet

Translation: I'm recommending top sheet to every lazybones

It has the potential to enhance the layout's precision as well, which allows content recipients to swiftly direct their attention to the core essence of the content.

Example 8: 润 (rùn) or 不润 (bù rùn)

Translation: Emigrate or not

Conclusion

In summary, this interdisciplinary examination of code-switching among Chinese individuals aged 20 to 40 provides a nuanced insight into this linguistic phenomenon within the changing educational landscape of China. The study highlights the intricate interrelation between language proficiency, cultural influences, and linguistic context, especially for those educated or working in Western countries. Utilizing WeChat chat texts and RED posts for corpus construction and analysis, the research uncovers distinctive patterns and motivations behind code-switching behaviors among bilinguals with diverse language backgrounds. The results emphasize the impact of sociolinguistic factors, cognitive processes, and language dominance on code-switching behaviors. Notably, individuals proficient in both Chinese and English show a propensity for inter-sentential switching, indicating an unconscious adaptation to their cultural and linguistic surroundings. Additionally, the study reveals how cognitive processes, such as lexical availability and syntactic compatibility, shape code-switching patterns, along with subtle shifts in language dominance influenced by contextual factors.

The research delineates the landscape of code-switching in professional and daily life contexts, offering insights into the evolving dynamics of the Chinese business world and the increasing popularity of code-switching on social platforms. In professional settings, code-switching is observed as a tool for descriptive purposes, contributing to industry-specific jargon and paradoxically enhancing the perceived professionalism of individuals. Meanwhile, on social platforms, code-switching emerges as a strategic linguistic choice to project a well-educated, professional, and trustworthy image.

While this study provides a comprehensive analysis, it acknowledges limitations, particularly the modest size of the corpora and the focus on a specific age group. Future research endeavors should aim to broaden the scope of data collection, encompassing a more diverse demographic and linguistic context, to offer a more holistic understanding of code-switching among young Chinese individuals. Nevertheless, the present findings contribute valuable insights to the interdisciplinary discourse on code-switching, laying a

foundation for future investigations into the evolving linguistic landscape of young Chinese individuals in a globalized world.

References

- Chen T. P. (2019). Code-switching among adolescents in school community – A sociolinguistic perspective. *Educational System, 41*, 159-196.
- Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (1991). *Accommodation theory: Communication, context and consequence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Moradi, H., & Chen, J. (2022). Attitude-behavior relation and language use: Chinese-English code-switching and code-mixing among Chinese undergraduate students. *SAGE Open, 12*(4).
- Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish Y Termino en español: Toward a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics, 18*, 581-618.
- Sandel, T., & Qiu, P. (2020). Code switching and language games in contemporary China; or, convergence and identity construction on WeChat. *Communication Convergence in Contemporary China: International Perspectives on Politics, Platforms, and Participation*, 175-205. Michigan State University Press.
- Wei, L., Milroy, L., & Ching, P. (2007). A two-step sociolinguistic analysis of code-switching and language choice: The example of a bilingual Chinese community in Britain. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 2*, 63-86.
- Zhou, Y., & Wei, M. (2007). Code-switching as a result of language acquisition: A case study of a 1.5 generation child from China. Paper presented at Annual Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Conference, Seattle, WA. Mar 24, 2007.

The Shift of *-poi*: Where Morphology, Semantics, and Pragmatics Meet

Luqing Qi, Man Zhang, Wenchao Li*

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3200102212@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] The Japanese suffix *poi* is widely used in a variety of situations ranging from literature and cyberspace to the daily life of the youth. As Iwasaki (2011, 2012) and Kojima (2005) pointed out, several novel usages have emerged, both semantically and morphologically, particularly the transformation to a modal auxiliary and sentence-final particle rather than a suffix indicated by Japanese linguists, whereas some questions remain. This study uncovered the semantic and pragmatic functions of *poi* based on Systemic Functional Linguistics and the classification framework of Japanese modality. The results suggest that (a) when *poi* is used as a modal auxiliary, it usually conveys speakers' speculation regarding certain matters based on solid evidence or personal feelings. Therefore, it is likely that *poi* is an "evidential" of epistemic modality; (b) *poi* used as a sentence-final particle expresses the attitude of a speaker and confirmation of the interlocutor's assumption, categorized as a modality of "dentatsutaido" (communicative attitude).

[Keywords] Japanese modality; *poi*; modal auxiliary; sentence-final particle; SFL; evidential; dentatsutaido

Introduction

The Japanese suffix *poi* has undergone a long-term evolution. Initially, it was a suffix attached to nouns, verbs, *i*-adjectives, and *na*-adjectives to form an adjective as a whole. Semantically, it denotes a state distinguished by a specific condition and possesses a pronounced inclination toward or imparting a clear impression of a certain quality:

- (1) a. attaching to noun: *mizu ppoi* (watery)
- b. attaching to verb: *wasure ppoi* (forgetful), *okori ppoi* (hot-tempered)
- c. attaching to *i*-adjective: *ara ppoi* (rough)
- d. attaching to *na*-adjective: *zoku ppoi* (vulgar)

Kojima (2003) indicates that the semantic inclination of *poi* can be broadly categorized into two distinct sorts when it links to a noun. First, the expression "X *ppoi*" is used to depict a situation in which "X is plentiful" or "X is prominent." For example, the term "*mizu ppoi osake*" (watery alcohol) refers to alcoholic beverages that have a diluted taste, giving the impression of being heavily watered down. The second category conveys conditions under which the impression of X is strongly given and a state where the inherent characteristics and related facets of X are evident.

Poi has developed new functions and meanings, i.e. an auxiliary, as in (2), and sentence-final particle, as in (3).

*Corresponding author. Email address: widelia@zju.edu.cn

(2) *poi* as an auxiliary

- a. When attached to the end-form of adjectives:

IE ni wa sooiu kinoo-ga nai ppoi desu ne
IE LOC TOP such-DEF function-NOM no AUX COP PART

‘It seems that there is no such function in IE.’

(BCCWJ, 2005)

- b. When attached to the *ta*-form of verbs:

Tonari ni nyūkyosha-ga ki-ta p poi
next door LOC tenant-NOM move in-PST AUX

‘It seems like a new tenant moved in next door.’

(BCCWJ, 2008)

- c. When attached to the dictionary form of verbs:

Nēchan-ga shigoto ni iku ppoi
my sister-NOM work DAF go AUX

‘My sister seems to go to work.’

(BCCWJ, 2008)

As these examples show, *poi* as an auxiliary is always attached to the end-form of adjectives, the *ta*-form of verbs, and the dictionary form of verbs, and is employed to signify the concepts of *mitai-da*, *rashii*, or *soo-da*. Despite the informal nature of these uses, *poi* has evolved into a means of expressing a hypothesis or assessment.

(3) *poi* as a sentence-final particle

A1: Raisyū kara yuki-ga furu ppoi
next week from-ABL snow-NOM fall AUX
‘It seems like it will snow from next week.’

A2: Raisyū kara yuki-ga furu
next week from-ABL snow-NOM fall
‘it will snow from next week.’

B1: shizuka de ii ppoi
quiet because of nice AUX
‘It’s nice because of quiet.’

B2: shizuka de ii
quiet because of nice
‘It’s nice because of quiet.’

The transition from A1 to A2 demonstrates a noticeable alteration in sentence meaning because of the absence of *poi*. Even if *poi* is removed, we can argue that the meaning of the sentence remains consistent across B1 and B2. In this particular instance, the term *poi* is an assertive expression clarifying that this is the speaker’s claim. In essence, *poi* evolved into a sentence-final particle that conveys a modality indicative of the speaker’s communicative mood.

This shift in *poi* involves morphology, semantics, and pragmatics. Thus, this study investigates the categorization of the Japanese sentence-final particle *poi* within the modality framework and the meanings and functions of *poi* within each category.

Previous Studies

Extensive research has been conducted on Japanese modality. Prior studies on the expansion of the meaning and usage of *poi* have yielded certain results. The following points are exceptional and highly relevant to this study:

Prior Studies of Japanese Modality

Inoue (2002) demonstrated that the substance of a sentence can be divided into two main parts: the objective and subjective elements, commonly referred to as the “material of description” and “way of expression.” The former is commonly denoted “propositional content,” and the latter “modality” (linguistic attitude). In general, modality refers to “the semantic area situated between affirmation and negation.” For instance, the four subsequent phrases may be generated by employing the verb *iku* (go) as propositional content and incorporating the modalities of speculation, command, inquiry, and politeness.

- a. Speculation:
Iku daroo.
go AUX
‘Probably go.’
- b. Command:
Ike!
go
‘Go!’
- c. Enquiry:
Iku ka?
go Q
‘Go?’
- d. Politeness:
Iki-masu.
go-POL
‘Will Go.’

Furthermore, Masuoka (1991) proposed the theoretical framework of “wrapping structure” that posits that “modality encompasses and surrounds the proposition.” Consider the following example:

- (4) a. kitto ame-ga furu ni-chigai-nai
sure rain-NOM fall AUX
‘It’s sure to rain.’
- b. [kitto [ame-ga furu koto] ni-chigai-nai]
 - c. [M[P]M] (M=Modality, P=Proposition)

Masuoka (1991) argued that the modalities containing proposition “P” include “tense,” “polarity,” “focus particles,” and “honorific and humble language.” However, Masuoka (2007) classified these components as non-modality elements belonging to the propositional domain rather than the modality domain and presented a way to study the connections between “subjective elements” and “modality.” Conventional understanding of modality as solely the “linguistic manifestation of subjectivity” is insufficient. Therefore, Masuoka (2007) proposed an alternative categorization of modality in Japanese as follows:

- a. Judgment modality (truth-value judgment modality, value judgment modality)

- b. Utterance modality
 - Utterance type modality
 - Dialogue modality (politeness modality, dialogue attitude modality)
- c. Special modality (explanatory modality, evaluative modality)

(Masuoka, 2007, p. 5)

Based on the classification approach proposed by Moriyama and Adachi (1996), Japanese modality expressions can be divided into four primary categories: the inflectional manifestation of the predicates or supplementary forms associated with each predicate; category analogous to adverbs; interjections and exclamatory particles; and expressions communicated through tone variations. Fukuda (2012) notes both similarities and significant differences between Japanese and English modalities and highlights the distinction between standard English modality theory and the modality theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), established by Halliday. Halliday (2004) provides a comprehensive overview of the various functions of languages categorized into three meta-functions: “ideational,” “interpersonal,” and “textual”; modality is situated within the interpersonal function, deviating from the conventional semantic approach that focuses on modality in English auxiliaries. This approach takes various modality expressions, which are characterized by modes of expression distinct from English, as research targets and makes it possible to clarify their functions. SFL proposes two key concepts of modality: modalization and modulation, with four distinct modalities: “probability” and “usuality” under modalization and “obligation” and “inclination” under modulation. According to Fukuda (2014), the concepts of “probability” (the level of certainty associated with the information conveyed) and “obligation” (the level of necessity associated with carrying out certain actions) within SFL’s four categories of modality might be considered analogous to “epistemic” and “deontic” in traditional English modality theory. In addition, Fukuda (2014) argues that comparison of these concepts with Masuoka’s (2007) explication of Japanese modality makes clear that “probability” in the former is equivalent to the latter’s concept of “truth-value judgment modality.”

Previous Research on the Spread of the Meaning and Function of *poi*

Categorizing the old usage of *poi*, Koide (2005) examined how the expansion of usage occurred, semantically analyzing the new usage into four categories: a) the expression of certainty as fact; b) indications of the speaker’s claim or way of conveying the content of the utterance; c) the indirectness of the expression: avoidance of direct expression; and d) meta-expression.

Koide (2005) contended that the shift from the old to new usage entailed morphological modifications. In contrast, changes within the old usage only occurred as semantic extensions, with no changes in morphological features. The event-oriented feature has vanished with the modification of *poi*. In other words, Koide (2005) highlighted an expansion from a modality expression directed at the proposition to that of utterance and communication. Iwasaki (2011) categorized *poi* semantically and illustrated its expansion, explaining how the usage, formed near the end of the Showa era, of “expressing the speaker’s judgment based on a certain situation,” was established and employed. Two methods for “indicating the speaker’s speculation” are also demonstrated: “expressing a certain situation in the speaker’s words” (“situation only” use) and “eliciting the continuous part (speculated content) through inference from the situation captured by the speaker” (“situation and inference”). According to Iwasaki (2012), examples of “appearing to be/feeling X” are first seen in the attributive usage, then later in the predicative usage as adjectival suffixes indicate the speaker’s speculation and assessment. She also considers how usages developed that convey, e.g., the speaker’s opinion, confirmation, and speculation. Iwasaki (2012) argued

that in cases where the interlocutor’s judgment is validated, agreement is still conveyed, even when there is no *poi* in the other person’s words. Koide’s (2005) explanation of “double speculation” is questioned by Zhou (2015), who highlights, based on modality theory, that the use of “presupposition presentation,” which avoids the topic’s core, is derived from the use of avoidance, itself originating from the speculative use of *poi* as an auxiliary, and notes that *poi*’s functions include “evidence-based speculation,” “evidence-free speculation,” “avoidance,” and “presupposition presentation.” Zhou (2015) defined “evidence-based speculation” as speculation based on “what the speaker has observed” that cannot be confirmed because of the absence of experience. This study takes this function as equivalent to the “situation and inference” put forth by Iwasaki (2011). Contrarily, “evidence-free speculation” is a speculative judgment based on sensations and appearances through the speaker’s own senses without conclusive “evidence.” This research assumes that this function is equivalent to Iwasaki’s (2011) “situation only.” Additionally, per Zhou (2015), “avoidance” comprises “responsibility avoidance” and “core avoidance,” with “presupposition presentation” deriving from the latter:

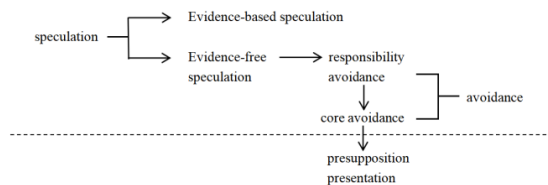


Figure 1. Semantic Extensions and Functional Derivations of *poi* (Zhou, 2015)

Limitations of Previous Studies

This study argues that Koide (2005) and Zhou (2015) have a few limitations. According to Koide (2005), “those related to the indirectness of the expression: avoidance of direct expression” is a new usage of *poi*. In this context, *poi* can be used after expressions such as *mitai* and *rashii* denoting ambiguous facts. Koide (2005) considers this usage double speculation, which implies the doubleness of the same function. In addition, it has the same structure as *mitai na yoo-da* and *rashii yoo na*. However, few explanations are offered for “double speculation.” Additionally, Koide (2005) suggested the usage of “those related to the indication of the speaker’s claim or the way of conveying the content of the utterance,” but the discussion is insufficient and few other studies have treated this topic. Further, Zhou (2015) showed that *poi*’s usage as a modality indicator has three functions: “speculation,” “avoidance,” and “presupposition presentation,” claiming that “avoidance” derives from “evidence-free speculation.” This study questions this analysis when determining the modality category for the function of “avoidance.” In addition, Iwasaki (2011, 2012) examined the diachronic evolution of *poi*’s meaning and usage, but barely used modality theory. This study focuses on the second and third new uses of *poi* proposed by Koide (2005) and poses the following questions.

Research Questions

(I) Which category of Japanese modality expressions does *poi*, that Koide (2005) proposes as a sentence-final particle indicating “those related to the indirectness of the way in which the sentence is suggested: avoidance of direct expression,” belong to? Furthermore, how should we clarify the functions of *poi* Zhou (2015) describes as “speculation,” “avoidance,” and “presupposition presentation” from the perspective of modality?

(II) *Poi*, as a sentence-final particle reflecting the speaker’s claim or modality connected to utterance and communication, has undergone expansion from a modality expression directed at the proposition to one of utterance and communication. Which subcategory of communication modality do these new usages belong to? How should these functions be interpreted?

Methodology

This section introduces the theoretical framework of this study. Analysis of Japanese sentence-final modalities increased in popularity during the postwar era. Researchers have examined Japanese modal auxiliaries word by word based on their semantic distinctions. As indicated in a previous study, several theories have been used to classify Japanese modal auxiliaries in recent years because of the diversification of criteria for categorizing Japanese modality. This study aims to analyze Japanese modality within the SFL framework, primarily investigating the innovative evidential use of *poi*. Furthermore, employing the categorization methodology outlined in *Modern Japanese Grammar 4* (henceforth, *Grammar 4*) of the Japanese Descriptive Grammar Research Group, we investigate the second novel application of *poi*.

Japanese Modality in the Theory of SFL

Research on English modality has emphasized modal auxiliaries, dividing them into two distinct categories based on their respective functions: epistemic and deontic modality. According to Tatsuki (1997), the categories mentioned earlier are derived from historical semantic shifts in English. Nevertheless, Masuoka (1991, 2007) found that this classification is not well suited to Japanese. In 1994, Halliday applied SFL to modality, following an investigation of modality expressions in languages other than English. Figure 2 summarizes the SFL analysis of modality.

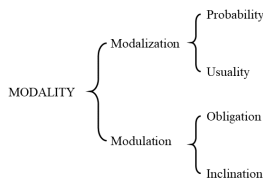


Figure 2. Modality in the Theory of SFL

Johnson (1994) categorized Japanese modal auxiliaries with epistemic modality functions into evidentials and non-evidentials, and provided illustrative instances, noting that:

(I) Seven main modal auxiliaries in Japanese express epistemic modalities: *hazu*, *ni chigainai*, *daroo*, *kamoshire-nai*, *yoo*, *soo*, and *rashii*. Of these, *yoo*, *soo*, and *rashii* are often labeled “evidentials,” conveying meanings such as “hearsay” or presenting sensory evidence.

(II) Evidentials are constituents that refer to visual or sensory evidence. According to (II), modal auxiliaries expressing epistemic modality convey the speaker’s speculation based on speculations from several sources. There are two distinct sources for a speaker’s speculation: their personal sensory perceptions or evaluations and the external circumstances that they are witnessing, listening to, or perceiving. Johnson (1994) highlights several issues in (III).

(III) In the use of these auxiliaries, two elements – information obtained from an outside source and subjective judgment – appear subtly interconnected.

Johnson’s classification approach can be considered an expansion of modality theory within the framework of SFL. Figure 2 can be transformed into Figure 3, a more detailed diagram that may be used to examine modal auxiliaries in Japanese.

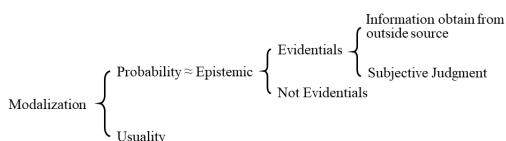


Figure 3. Expansion of Modalization

Modality of Dentatsutaido

Dentatsutaido expresses how the speaker perceives a situation and intends to convey it to the listener through utterance. The topic of this particular modality was mentioned by Masuoka (1991). Nevertheless, determining the communicative function of a sentence, or more specifically, the categorization of this specific type of modality, has posed a challenge.

This study employs the classification scheme presented in *Grammar 4*, whereby dentatsutaido is conveyed by sentence-final particles revealing how the speaker perceives the speech situation and how they intend to indicate it to the listener. This book argued that there are two varieties of sentence-final particles, one type having functions related to conveying and confirming information to the recipient and having a strongly dialogic nature, and the other possessing a strong nondialogic nature and functions that reflect recognition or convey exclamations. The former are called sentence-final particles expressing a sense of notification, the latter those expressing confirmation and interjection. Using this classification, we investigated the meaning and usage of *poi* by comparing it to other sentence-final particles, such as *ne* and *yone*.

Table 2. Sentence-Final Particles Indicating Modality of Dentatsutaido

Sentence-Final Particles to Express Attitude					Sentence-Final Particles to Express Confirmation and Interjection			
<i>yo</i>	<i>zo</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>naa</i>	<i>yone</i>

Data Source

NINJAL-LWP (NINJAL-Lago Word Profiler) for Tsukuba Web Corpus (TWC) (ver. 1.40) and *Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese (BCCWJ) (ver. 1.1)* are two important linguistic resources developed by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL). In this study, the majority of the example sentences were derived from these two Japanese corpora and translated into English. NINJAL-LWP for TWC is a tool for searching a corpus of approximately 1.1 billion words collected from Japanese-language websites created to provide linguistic researchers with a comprehensive representative sample of contemporary Japanese language usage on the Internet. The search function is based on the use of NINJAL-LWP, a corpus search system developed jointly by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL) and Lago Institute of Language. The BCCWJ is another extensive collection of texts developed by NINJAL. As the name suggests, it is a corpus created to grasp the breadth of contemporary written Japanese, containing extensive samples of modern Japanese texts to ensure a uniquely balanced corpus. The data comprise 104.3 million words covering genres such as general books and

magazines, newspapers, business reports, blogs, Internet forums, textbooks, and legal documents. Random samples of each genre were taken.

Discussion

As stated in the preceding section, Koide (2005) noted that *poi* has four new uses, the first three being modal expressions. Nonetheless, it is unclear what modalities these new usages represent. Iwasaki (2011) noted that in recent years, *poi* has been utilized to indicate the speaker's conjecture and can be divided into two general patterns. Figure 1 shows that Zhou (2015) also re-examined the meaning and usage of *poi* from the perspective of modality. In the present study, we intend to reconsider these findings and elucidate the category to which *poi* belongs, as well as its meaning and usage.

Poi as a Modal Auxiliary Expressing Probability

- (5) Pasokon no dengen ga ira-nai.
 computer gen power nom have-neg
 Koware-te shimat-ta rashii.
 broke-ger finish-past aux
 'This computer has no power. It seems to be broken.'

(*Contemporary Japanese Grammar 4*)

- (6) Nani ka jiko ga at-ta yoo-da na.
 Something Q accident Nom exist-past Aux-Cop part
 Densha ga daibu okurete-iru.
 Train nom considerably delay-perf
 'There seems to have been some accident. The train is considerably delayed.'

(*Japanese Language Handbook for Teachers 4: Grammar II*)

Yoo-da and *rashii* are the most common auxiliaries that convey a speaker's speculation. In (5) and (6), the speaker notices "the computer has no power" and "the train is considerably delayed." Based on the "evidence," the speaker draws their own conclusions and hypothesizes that "the computer is broken" and "there has been an accident." Through their own senses, the speaker is able to perceive the causes and reasons of the matter, obtain evidence, and derive their estimation. *Poi* has a novel usage analogous to that of *yoo-da* and *rashii*.

- (7) Nandaka tonari ni nyuukyosha ga ki-ta ppoi desu.
 Somehow next-door DAT tenant NOM come-PAST AUX COP
 'It appears that a new tenant has taken up residence next door.'

(Supplement: For quite some time, the speaker has been hearing noises that sound like the people next door are sorting stuff. It's been a year since the speaker came into this apartment, and finally, someone has arrived at the empty neighboring unit.) (BCCWJ, 2008)

- (8) Soshite fukanzen nenshoo de shiroi kemuri ga...
 then incomplete combustion INS white smoke NOM
 (tabun nenryoo funsha no nozuru ga tsumat-ta ppoi)
 (likely fuel injection GEN nozzle NOM clog-PAST AUX)
 'Then, as a result of incomplete combustion, white smoke billows forth... (This is most likely due

to a clogged fuel injection nozzle.)’

(BCCWJ, 2008)

In (7), the speaker infers that someone has moved in next door because they hear “noises that sound like they’re sorting stuff.” In (8), the speaker observes “white smoke” flowing and hypothesizes that it is the result of a “clogged fuel injection nozzle.” In both (7) and (8), *poi* conveys the speaker’s speculation based on what they hear or see. In these instances, even though the speaker is unable to draw a definitive conclusion, they describe the situation that serves as the foundation for their conjecture; using *poi*, they indicating the possibility that the conjectured content is true. From the perspective of modality theory in SFL, the information from outside (external sources) mentioned in the previous clause is the foundation for establishing the conjecture. Moreover, *poi* indicates the content of conjecture based on the speaker’s thoughts and state, meaning “somehow feeling that...,” “having a feeling that...,” or “sensing that...”

(9) Shisso-na heya dat-ta.

Modest-cop room past

Gazai ya okikake no e ga, amari teinei dewa-nai

Art material cop unfinished gen works nom, almost neat cnt-neg

Kanji de oite-ar.

feeling ins put-res

2 DK de moo-hitotsu no heya wa shinshitsu ppoi.

2 DK ins one more gen room top bedroom aux

‘It was a modest room. Art materials and unfinished works were strewn about. The additional room in the 2DK arrangement appeared to be a bedroom.’

(*Do Not Laugh at the Sex of Naoko Yamazaki and Others*)

(10) (Kono kiji wo) kuwashiku wa mite-(i)nai desu ga, iphone

(this article ACC) thorough FOC read-PERF-NEG COP CNT, iphone

No kousei purofairu wo riyooHITE-(i)ru ppoi desu.

GEN configuration profile ACC use-PERF AUX COP

‘(I haven’t read this article thoroughly, but) it appears that the author is using the iPhone configuration profile.’

(Supplement: This sentence is a comment to an article that describes how to migrate data from an iPhone 3GS to an iPhone 4S.)

(*NINJAL-LWP for TWC, 2011*)

In (9), the speaker observes that “art materials and unfinished work were strewn about.” However, *poi* is used to suggest “the additional room appeared to be a bedroom,” which they have not yet entered. This can be considered a subjective judgment, as it is not based on external evidence. Similarly, in (10), the author of the comment “ha[s]n’t read this article thoroughly” but has concluded that “it appears that the author is using the iPhone configuration profile.” This speculation is based entirely on the speaker’s own opinion. According to modality theory in SFL, deriving inferences based solely on one’s own thoughts without external information to support the conjecture, as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, is a subjective judgment. As stated by Johnson (1994), the auxiliary *poi* possesses two probabilistic features of modality expression evidentials, so it is certain that it belongs to evidentials.

Poi as a Modality of Dentatsutaido

According to Koide (2005), for *poi*, morphological changes are closely intertwined with meaning and usage shifts. As a sentence-final particle, *poi* indicates how the speaker perceives a situation and intends to convey it to the audience. According to *Modern Japanese Grammar 4: Modality* (2003), it serves as an indicator of the mode of communication attitude.

Poi as a Sentence-Final Particle for Attitude

Koide (2005) noted that *poi* is used after words such as *mitai* and *rashii* that indicate ambiguous facts, so that *rashii-ppoi* and *mitai-ppoi* serve to double the speculation. In addition, Zhou (2015) argues against Koide's (2005) conclusion, noting that although the statement of doubling speculation should still hold true when the roles of *rashii* and *poi* are reversed, there are simply no actual examples of *ppoi-rashii* or *ppoi-mitai*; thus, it is an unstable syntactic structure.

- (11) Maa, saikoo-na miracle wa ii-n-desu kedo,
PART, marvelous-COP Miracle TOP fantastic-COMP-COP but,
Nandaka shuugakuryokoo kara kaetteki-tara sakubun kaka-sareru
Somehow school trip from return-COND composition write-PASS
mitai-ppoi desu yo. Kansoo toka wo.
AUX -PARTCOP PART Impression something ACC
'The marvelous Miracle is fantastic, but after returning from the school trip, it appears that we are being forced to write a composition about something like our impression.'

(Koide, 2005)

- (12) Niigata de basha 43 man en ga de-ta rashii-ppoi.

Niigata IOC carriage 430,000yen NOM sell-PAST AUX -PART

'A carriage in Niigata appears to have sold for 430,000 yen.'

(Supplement: After the summer horse racing season concludes, the speaker would like to visit the Hanshin Racecourse and its environs.)

(Koide, 2005)

In (11), the speaker expresses their sentiments adequately by stating, "It appears that we are being forced to write a composition." It can be inferred that the speaker believes, "It not so bad to be required to write a composition, but I don't want to do so immediately after returning from a school trip." In this instance, removing *poi* is unlikely to change the meaning of the preceding sentence. However, by employing *poi*, the speaker can avoid explicitly expressing their emotions, thereby reducing the likelihood of inciting negative consequences or taking responsibility, softening their attitude toward the listener. In (12), *poi* fulfills the same purpose as in (11). Therefore, *poi* can be described as a sentence-final particle that conveys a type of notification and attitude.

Poi as a Sentence-Final Particle for Confirmation and Interjection

Moving on to another of *poi*'s pragmatic functions, i.e., a sentence-final particle rendering confirmation and interjection, let us consider (13) - (15):

- (13) [Context: The speaker impulsively bought a book from the shelf at the bookstore. The author of the book claimed frequently that "all the information was crammed in the book and it is convenient to be memorized"; however, the speaker found that there is little mention of detailed information]

Kitto taishita tema mo kake-zu, saratto kai-ta ni-chigai-nai-ppoi.

sure much labor NOM dedicate-NEG, informally write-PAST AUX-PART

- ‘It is almost sure that the book was written hastily and informally.’
- (14) [Context: The speaker is working on quieting the fan area of my custom-built PC and finds that fans with an 8cm edge and rotation speeds of less than 1500 RPM appear quiet and pleasant]
 Onaji kaitensuu demo usugata yori atsugata (toiu ka, futsuu no atsumi
 Same rotation speed nom thin type than thick type(or rather, normal gen thickness
 no yatsu) no hoo ga Shizuka de ii ppoi.
 GEN thing) gen one nom quiet cop better aux
 ‘Thicker fans (or rather, ones with a normal thickness) appear to be quieter and better than their thinner counterparts, even at the same rotation speed.’
- (13)’ saratto kaita ni-chigai-nai.
 Informally write-PAST AUX
 ‘It is sure that the book was written hastily and informally.’
- (14)’ shizuka de ii.
 quiet COP better
 ‘(Thicker fans) are quieter and better.’
- (15) Kimi wa aikawara-zu goojuu da.
 you TOP change-NEG stubborn COP
 ‘You’re as stubborn as ever.’
- (15)’ Kimi wa aikawara-zu goojuu da ne.
 You TOP change- NEG stubborn COP PART
 ‘You’re as stubborn as ever.’

In (13), the speaker is convinced that the author of the book claiming that “all the information was crammed in the book and it is convenient to be memorized” did not write diligently but rather carelessly. In (14), the speaker believes that thicker computer fans are more effective and quieter than thicker fans. Even if *poi* is removed from these sentences, the speaker’s assertions and perceptions remain unmodified. Similar to what (15) and (15)’ demonstrate for *ne*, *poi* serves to convey the speaker’s recognition and assertion to the listener while internally confirming the sentence’s content. Furthermore, as noted by Iwasaki (2012), in recent years, *poi* can serve to acknowledge and affirm the statement of an interlocutor.

- (16) “Mata fu-rare-ta no?”
 Again reject-PASS-PAST Q
 ‘Did you get rejected once again?’ (The speaker summoned Nao, who was finally going downstairs for dinner.)
 “ ppoi-ne.”
 PART-PART
 ‘It seems so.’ (Nao sat down with a shrug of her shoulders.)

(Seo, M. 2004)

- (17) “Nan-ya!?”
 Something-Q
 ‘What is it!?’
 “Nani ka nige-ta. Socchi it-ta!”
 Something Q escape- PAST There go- PAST
 ‘Something escaped. That way!’
 “Saru ka!?”

monkey Q
 ‘A monkey!?’
 “ppoi!”
 PART
 ‘...It seems so!’

(Nishi, K. 2009)

In (16) and (17), *poi* is absent from the interlocutor’s speech. The interlocutor is making assumptions, such as “Nao got rejected once again” and “the creature that escaped was a monkey” and the speaker confirms these assumptions with “It seems so.” In this instance, the use of *poi* indicates the speaker’s guess, confirming the interlocutor’s assumption. In other words, it expresses comprehension and confirmation. Table 3 illustrates the new use of *poi* as a modality for dentatsutaido.

Table 3. *The Sentence-Final Particle poi Indicating Modality of Dentatsutaido*

Sentence-Final Particle to Express Attitude					Sentence-Final Particle to Express Confirmation and Interjection					
<i>yo</i>	<i>zo</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>poi</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>naa</i>	<i>yone</i>	

Conclusion

This study examined the modality of new uses of *poi* from the perspective of modality theory in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and dentatsutaido. Originally, *poi* was a suffix that functioned to form adjectives; it has since been extended to serve as an auxiliary verb and finally as a sentence-final particle. Furthermore, we scrutinized the two new uses in depth. First, *poi* serves as a modal auxiliary expressing probability, indicating the speaker’s estimate, similar to *yoo-da* and *rashii* when speakers acquire information from the outside world through their senses and draw conclusions or inferences. The second function of *poi* is to draw conclusions and judgments based on the speakers’ own thoughts and feelings. The function of *poi* as a sentence-final particle expressing dentatsutaido modality was also investigated in this study. First, when a speaker attempts to convey their emotions or thoughts to the listener, *poi* softens without changing the preceding sentence’s meaning. In addition, *poi* serves as a sentence-final particle that conveys confirmation and exclamation like *ne*, or serves to demonstrate the speaker’s acknowledgment and assertiveness toward the listener. We also analyzed the use of *poi* as an emerging expression among young people that confirms the interlocutor’s assertion and indicates comprehension. As the usage of *poi* expands, it becomes clear that its morphological nature has shifted from a suffix to a modal auxiliary and sentence-final particle. Nevertheless, when considering grammaticalization theory, it is noteworthy that the expansion from a suffix to a sentence-final particle goes against the typical directionality observed in grammaticalization. Therefore, a more comprehensive analysis within a broader context is required. We hope to investigate this issue further in the future.

References

- BCCWJ (2005, 2008). *Balanced corpus of contemporary written Japanese*. Retrieved from <http://chunagon.ninjal.ac.jp/bccwj-nt/search>.
- Fukuda, K. (2012). Modality: From a standpoint of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Takamichi Aki, (ed.), *Descriptive and Theoretical Study of Language Types*, pp.115-133.
- Fukuda, K. (2014). Notes on Japanese modality. *Universality and Individuality in Language*, 5, 1-13.

- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. 3rd Ed. London: Edward Arnold.
- Inoue, M. (2002). Modality. Takuichiro Onishi, (ed.), *A Guide to the Investigation of Dialect Grammar*.
- Iwasaki, M. (2011). On the historical change of “*poi*” through meanings and usages. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 31, 83-96.
- Iwasaki, M. (2012). A historical study of changes in the meaning of adjectival suffix: “-*poi*” and “-*rashii*”. Okayama University.
- Japanese Descriptive Grammar Research Association. (2003). *Modern Japanese grammar 4: Modality*, p. 239. Kurosio Publishers.
- Johnson, M. Y. (1994). *Japanese modality: A study of modal auxiliaries, conditionals and aspectual categories*. University of Minnesota ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, pp. 52, 91.
- Koide, K. (2005). The expansion of the use of suffix “*poi*”: How did “*yuki-ga furu ppoi*” come into being? *Journal of Gunma Prefectural Women’s University*, (26), 1-13.
- Kojima, S. (2003). A change in the suffix *poi*. *Meikai Japanese Language Journal*, (8), 31-38.
- Masuoka, T. (1991). *Grammar of modality*. Tokyo: Kurosio Publishers.
- Masuoka, T. (2007). *Modality*. Tokyo: Kurosio Publishers.
- Moriyama, T., & Adachi, T. (1996). *Self-mastery of Japanese Grammar Series 9: Narrative methods of sentences*. Kurosio Publishers.
- Nishi, K. (2009). *The life of a fool*, (1st ed.). Shogakukan-Shueisha Productions.
- NINJAL-LWP for TWC (2011). *National institute for Japanese language and linguistics*. Lago Institute of Language for Tsukuba Web Corpus. Retrieved from <https://tsukubawebcorpus.jp>.
- Seo, M. (2004). *The dining table of happiness*, (1st ed.). Kodansha Publishers.
- Tatsuki, M. (1997). On the interpretation of auxiliary verbs in Japanese and English: Mood and modality from the perspective of interpersonal meaning. *Mainstream*, 58, 127-142.
- The Japan Foundation Japanese Language Institute. (2001). *Japanese language handbook for teachers 4: Grammar II*, (1st ed.). Bonjinsha Publishers.
- Yamazaki, N. (2004). *Do not laugh at the sex of Naoko Yamazaki and others*, (1st ed.). Kawade Shobo Shinsha Publishers.
- Zhou, Y. (2015). The meaning and usage of auxiliary “*poi*”: From a standpoint of modality. *Essays on Japanese Literature*, 39, 32-19.

Generation Mechanisms and Causes of Verbal Humor using Register Deviation: A Study of the Russian Stand-up Comedy *Standup*

Yue Wang, Qin Wang, Xin Lin, Ranran Xue¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3200100242@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] Verbal humor is a common phenomenon of language, and prior studies have proved the feasibility of analyzing verbal humor with register theory. Based on previous discoveries, this study aims to conclude some generation mechanisms of verbal humor by analyzing a self-built corpus of the 9th season of the Russian stand-up comedy *Standup*. Through examining the field, tenor and mode of discourses, we have found possible ways of humor generation like polysemous conversion and mechanical applications of logic. After this analysis, we also discuss two possible reasons for such verbal humor – cultural factors and stage factors.

[Keywords] register theory; verbal humor; stand-up comedy; register deviation

Introduction

The concept of “register” was first used by Reid (1956) in his research on bilingualism and was later developed by Halliday in 1985. Halliday regards register as “a variety of language, corresponding to a variety of situation” which is composed of three variables: field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the range of speech, including the topic of conversation and contextual factors like the place of conversation (Halliday, 1985). Tenor refers to the tone of speech, concerning the social relationship between communicators and the purpose of language activities. Mode refers to the way of speech, focusing on the medium or channel through which language activities are carried. These three variables are tightly interconnected, and any change in one of them will lead to variation in language form, thus causing register deviation (Zhang, 2021, p. 3).

Register deviation is an important part of the register theory. In everyday conversations, people tend to mix different variables of register so as to achieve certain purposes. According to Halliday, register deviation is the uncommon selection and combination of register, through which form can be divided into three types: field deviation, tenor deviation and mode deviation. Field deviation refers to the mismatch between the choice of words and the conversations; tenor deviation refers to the shift of social relationship or social distance between interlocutors, such as the shift between formal language and informal language; mode deviation refers to change in the media or channel of conversation, such as quoting a line from TV drama in daily chats (Hu, Zhu, & Zhang, 1989).

Halliday pointed out that the humor of language is often the result of register deviation (Lukin, Moore, Herke, Wegener, & Wu, 2001). In order to find the connection between register deviation and verbal humor, we analyzed language materials from the Russian stand-up comedy *Standup* (9th season). The show is still being updated, thus ensuring the freshness of the language materials. In addition, *Standup* received good reviews on the Russian online database Kino Poisk, which makes us believe that this show can serve as a good reflection of Russian young people’s concepts of humor, and is therefore worthy of analysis. Our study focused on recording and translating the first ten episodes of *Standup*, 9th season (60 separate stand-

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: ranyu06@163.com

up comedy segments in total). We analyze the verbal humor in Standup, 9th season from the perspective of register deviation in order to understand why it can make people laugh. In addition, we discuss the underlying reason behind the humor.

This study used a combination of numerical analysis and detailed investigation to analyze a total of 60 excerpts from the ninth season of Standup. Our analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of these 60 segments.

By using the case study method and applying inductive reasoning, this research carefully examined the data. The data revealed an average of 6 punchlines within each collection. The main focus of this study was to examine these moments of laughter, explain their significance within the collection, and examine sample sentences to draw conclusions.

Manifestations of Register Deviation

Field Deviation

As the background of conversations, field restricts the concepts and functions of language activities and frames certain topics and environments, thus influencing people's expression of their experiences and the establishments of logic between language units. Field deviation is the most common humor technique in the show *Standup* and is expressed in various ways (Zheng, 2016). Here we provide specific examples for analysis (italicized and bold parts indicate punchlines; words in brackets are included to better understand the scene):

1. **Unreasonable focus of attention.**

Я узнал вот почему мужчина заходит первый (в лифт). Этикет. Мужчина заходит лишь первый, потому, что может такое случится, что двери открылись, а лифт не приехал—. А я идиот, который такой. Он не приехал, но я пошёл. «Моя хорошая там лифта нет—», и она такой **«Какой галантный! Посмотрите на него, какой джентльмен.»** (Гурам Амарян)

Translation: I found out the reason why men come first (into the lifts). Etiquette. Men go first only because there might be circumstances where the doors have opened, but the elevator has not arrived—. And I'm an idiot like this. The lift didn't come, but I went in. "My goodness there's no lift—" and the lady is like **"What a gallant! Look at him, what a gentleman!"**

In this scene the lady is supposed to worry about her companion's safety when seeing him fall from the lift, yet her attention is wrongly drawn to his "gentility". The theme has been changed by the lady's strange focus, thus causing misuse in field, as well as creating a contrast with the former word идиот (idiot).

2. **Casual explanation of professional terms.**

У меня получается так полжизни деньги в крипте хранил, но он говорит: «Да нет, Жек, нельзя так настраиваться. Это реальный пассивный доход.» Я думал «не надо мне сказки про пассивный доход рассказывать.» Только ну, я про пассивный доход знаю, мы все знаем. **«Это когда ты дома, да, а матушка работает»** (Евгений Чебатков).

Translation: I've been keeping money in the crypt for half of my life, but my friend says: "No, Zhek, you can't tune in like that. This is a real passive income." I thought, "Don't tell me stories about passive income." It's just, well, I know about passive income, we all know. **It's when you're at home, right, and you mother is working.**

Here the performer makes a shift in field by using an example from daily life to explain the term пассивный доход (passive income) while keeping its original meaning (increasing one's income without engaging any action).

3. Multiple meanings.

Знаете, когда ты приходишь (в ресторан) эти официанты, 100 меню, вот эти. Ты приходишь, говорит «Вот наше основное меню, вот летнее меню, вот акции, вот устное меню, вот веганское меню, вот винная карта, вот чайная карта, *вот карта России, карта сокровищ, карта тройка, ну и валет бубновый тоже*» (Андрей Атлас).

Translation: You know when you come in (to the restaurant) those waiters have 100 menus waiting for you, yeah like that. You come in, he says: “Here is our main menu, here is the summer menu, here are the special offers, here is the oral menu, here’s the vegan menu, here’s the wine menu, here’s the tea menu, *here’s the map of Russia, here’s the treasure map, the transport card troika, and, well, the jack of diamonds too*”.

Here the performer makes a smart shift in topic through a word with multiple meanings-карта (menu/card/map). The meaning of this word has changed from “menu” to “map”, “transport card” and even “poker card”. The stacking of many long words also makes for an interesting image of the waiter.

У меня вообще, да извращённые отношения к смерти. Я не особо религиозный человек. единственные моменты, когда я задумываюсь о своей вере, это когда, мне надо сделать рентген в больнице. *Да, потому что именно тогда у меня спрашивают, есть ли на мне крестик* (Игорь Тарлецкий).

Translation: In general, I have a, well, rather perverted attitude to death. I’m not a particularly religious person. The only time when I think about my faith is when I need to get an X-ray at the hospital, *because that’s when they ask me if I have a cross with me.*

Here the two topics (hospital and religion) are connected through the inquiry of doctors. Apart from being a symbol of Christianity and thus connected with beliefs, crosses are also required to be taken off before medical examinations since they are usually made of metal.

4. Same logic in different contexts.

Спорт-бар, вдумайтесь само название, спорт-бар. *Никого не смущает, спорт-бар, как фитнес-бургер. Кого мы обманываем?* Я не понимаю. Концепция заведения спортбара какая? Люди приходят туда, жрать гренки, пить пиво и смотреть как другие люди занимаются спортом, правильно? Ну по этой логике я могу взять ведро крыльев, банку пива, встать на улице возле фитнес центра, где за стеклом девки бегают на дорожках правильно и тоже стоять непонятно кому орать *«Кто так бегают, дура! Кто тебя поставил сюда?»* (Тимур Джанкёзов).

Translation: A Sports Bar. Do think about the name itself, Sports Bar. **It won’t attract anyone. Sports Bar, like a fitness burger. I mean, who are we deceiving?** I can’t understand. What is the concept of a Sports Bar? People come there to have pieces of fried bread, drink beers and watch how others work out, right? Well, according to this logic, I can take a bucket of wings and a can of beer, standing on the street near the fitness center, where girls run on tracks behind the glass in a right way, and yell at some of them: **“No one would run like that, fool! Who the hell put you here?”**

² Here the words “menu”, “map” and “card” are all represented in Russian with the same word “карта”. Since the jack of diamonds is also a poker “card”, it’s also part of the punchline.

Here we can see two field deviations. First, the performer compares the relationship between sports and bars to that between fitness and burger, noting that this is just self-deception. Then, he applies business logic behind this bar, comparing customers eating in the bar and comparing how others workout to a single person taking food to a fitness center and finding faults in the exercise of the women inside. The same logic leads to different results in different contexts, thus making it humorous.

5. Same context with different logics.

Но у меня есть оправдание, почему я боюсь (метро в Москве). Потому, что я родился и вырос в деревне, да, там нет метро. Ну в деревне, если ты под землёй, *это конечная. Вы приехали, никто не выходит* (Денис Гвоздёв).

Translation: But I have a just excuse for my fear (of metros in Moscow). That's because I was born and raised in the village. Yeah, we don't have metros there. In the village, if you become under the ground, **it'll be all. Once you went there, no one would come out.**

On contrary to the former example, the two themes here (metro and death) share the same environment (underground), yet they lead to different associations because the same context can be interpreted with different logic (urban logic and rural logic). Therefore, it makes sense for the performer to explain his fear of metros by saying that in his village, what is underground often means death.

Tenor Deviation

As a reflection of social relationships between interlocutors and goals of language activities, tenor embodies the expression of the speaker's emotions, and influences the interpersonal function of language. Since *Standup* is a one-person show, performers tend to pay less attention to the communicative function of language. Therefore, tenor deviations generally are seen only when performers are imitating different interlocutors.

1. Change in address.

Я недавно услышал удивительную фразу, которую в целом только в России можно услышать. Я сидел в гостишке, в ресторане, обедал, там сидел мужик и ребёнок. Ему в моменте сказал: «*Сынок, братишка, сгоняй в магазин, будь друг.*³» *Кто он тебе в итоге?* То он с каждой фразой отдалялся от него родственник: сынок, братишка, дружище назад, уже тип незнакомый вернулся у нас (Павел Дедищев).

Translation: Recently I heard an amazing sentence, which in general can be heard only in Russia. I was sitting in a restaurant having my lunch, a man and a child were sitting there. At the moment the man said to the child: “**Son, dude, go to the store. Be a friend**”. **Who on earth is he to you?** There he was pushing his relative away with each phrase: son, brother, friend in the end, already kind of a stranger to us.

Here the father uses three words to call his son: сынок (son), братишка (brother, dude) and друг (friend). These three words all fit the context and are very Russian. However, using these words in one single sentence may make it difficult for others to understand the relationship between them. Besides, as is commented by the performer, the order of these words indeed implies the estrangement between the man and the child, thus confusing the audience.

2. Change in emotion.

А поаплодируйте те, кто не любит, когда неграмотно пишут. Это не какие то сложные слова, типа привилегия, да, зачем тебе знать то, что у тебя никогда не будет. Я про такие слова, знаете,

³ Here the word "son/сынок" simply means a son of a father (in affectionate form), "dude/братишка" has a meaning that refers more intimately to a young boy, and "be a friend/будь друг" is itself a customary phrase, meaning "please".

когда сообщения на телефон приходят и ты паузу делаешь, откидываешься в кресле, такой *«Блин, и я женат на этом человеке»*. *«Нет Оля, я не могу купить грейфрукт. Его не существует!»* (Роман Косицын)

Translation: Those who do not like others writing illiterately, please put your hands together. I mean, it's not those complicated words, like privilege, which you know you'll never have. You know, I'm talking about the words in messages you received that will make you pause, lean back in your chair and be like **“Damn, and I'm married to this guy!”**. **“No Olya, I can't buy a greyfruit, IT DOESN'T EXIST!”**

Husbands and wives are supposed to care and support each other, yet the performer displays his complaint and helplessness when finding his wife mistypes a simple word, thus amusing the audience. Besides, the mistyped word itself is also funny.

Mode Deviation

Mode affects the discourse functions of language. When mode changes, the content of language might also shift due to the change in expression (Shore, 2015). In *Standup*, the speech style of performers is mostly consistent and rather casual, which makes alternative expressions particularly interesting.

1. **Deviation of mode from social occasions.**

И он мне говорит: «Женя, это всё безопасно. Это современные технологии, никто ничего не украдет.» Я говорю «Окей, у нас были деньги на счету и в какой то момент они пропали, просто их кто то украл» Я говорю: «Как ты вышел?» Саня такой «Ё-моё, это кто то подключился через другой пароль украл и потом через другой компьютер. Это сделал, это коды электронные и потом получается украл» это он так сказал. Я сказал *«Бог дал Бог взял.»* (Евгений Чебатков)

Translation: And he tells me: “Zhenya, it's very safe. They are modern technologies, no one will steal anything.” And I say: “Okay, we had money in the account and at some point, it disappeared, someone just stole it.” I say: “How did you get out?” Sanya was like “Oh mine, someone logged in through another password, stole and later connected through another computer. Someone did it, there are electronic codes and it turns out that someone stole my money!” That's what he said. And I said **“The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away.”**

Here the performer has intended to comfort his friend, whose money had been stolen, yet what he said is a grand phrase that refers to the Bible. Contrasts are made between the seriousness of this quote and the former casual chats between friends.

Я никогда не умел круто конфликты решать словесно, потому что чем сильнее я начинаю кипятиваться, тем суше у меня словарный запас. А это очень тупо выглядит, когда ты окончание не договариваешь. Понял, когда ты и чётко мне злою *«Да, ещё здесь. Да, всё»* (Валентин Сидоров).

Translation: I've never been able to coolly solve conflicts, because the angrier I get, the drier my vocabulary is. And it looks very stupid when you don't reach to the end. It's like when you clearly say to me **“Yeah, still here. Yeah, that's all.”**

The scene in the speech of the performer is supposed to be fierce: two guys having a row with each other. However, the performer here can only repeat simple words that make him look nervous rather than angry, which, to some extent, also constructs a contrast with the tall and strong image of the performer.

2. **Use of rhetoric.**

Я просто ещё не очень понимаю ветеринаров в плане, что я отучился на врача, на стоматолога учился и там надо, короче, *семнадцать тысяч лет где-то учиться чтобы 1 вид лечить 1*

человека. 1 из 17 член ты только именно к какому то врачу приходишь, думаю, что я не знаю, что «Это вам другому врачу, идите». Ты 5 лет отучился всех животных лечишь, да? В смысле, да. **И хомяка и кота, да. И зебры, льва, да.** (Артём Винокур)

Translation: I just don't really understand veterinarians. If I want to study to be a doctor or a dentist, I need to, in short, **study somewhere for seventeen thousand years to treat one person in one way.** One out of seventeen members, you only need to come to a doctor, thinking that I don't know what's "Here's another doctor for you, please go." Yet you learn how to cure all animals in five years, right? Generally speaking, yes. **Both hamsters and cats, yes, plus zebras and lions, yes.**

Here the performer exaggerates his experience of learning to be a dentist by describing it as learning one way to cure for more than 1,000 years, yet veterinarians can learn to cure all kinds of animals in just five years. Besides, in order to illustrate the wide range of animals that vets can treat, the performer lists both common pets (hamsters, cats) and fierce wild animals (zebras, lions) that are rarely seen in Russia.

3. **Shift in the way of speaking.**

Так, недавно понял, что очень люблю шепелявых людей. Они как будто праздник всегда с собой носят, как бы тебя хреново не было, у тебя оттуда выйти нет. Приедет траур, и он подходит и говорит «**Соболезно! Ходялся ужасно.** (lispng here)» Ты такой «**Да, нет Джиган, всё нормально, спасибо.**» (Валентин Сидоров)

Translation: Well, recently I realized that I really like lispng. It's like they always carry a holiday with them. No matter how awful it is, you won't be able to get out of there. There is a mourning, and he comes up and says: "**I'm sorry! He passed away terribly.**" (lispng here) And you're like "**Well, Geegun⁴, it's fine, thank you.**"

The language of conversation at a funeral, a rather solemn occasion, will also generally be more serious, but the performer's imitation of a lispng person (whom he jokingly compares to a Russian rapper) deviates from the expected linguistic expression due to the unconventionality and difficulty of his or her speech, thus generating humor.

It can be concluded that the theory of register deviation is explanatory for the verbal humor in Standup. With the help of this theory, we are able to understand some of ways generating humor and, in turn, have the possibility of intentionally using such ways in our own Russian discourse activities in order to achieve better communicative results.

Factors of Register Deviation in *Standup*

Influence of Russian Culture

Humor, to some extent, is an encapsulation of culture, since humor generates from all aspects of human life, and reflects people's thoughts and ideas. In *Standup*, the unique Russian culture influences register deviation in many ways. First, Russian culture is reflected in the choice of topics. For instance, what makes the hospital example discussed above funny is the clever shift in subject through use of a symbol of religion. In fact, religion is a rather familiar theme in Russian anecdotes, as the Orthodox church, after the baptism of Rus, has played an important role in the life of Russian people (Zezina, Koshman, & Shulgin, 1990). It once helped to unite the whole country together, and therefore enjoyed a high status in Russian society. Though the importance of religion has diminished after the revolution in 1917, its influence lasts until today.

⁴ Geegun (Джиган) is a famous Russian rapper who often lisps.

However, the seriousness of religion has faded for non-believers, and the image of religion in Russian anecdotes might differ from reality. For better understanding of this, we examine two more examples:

[1] *Святой Пётр стучится к Богу в кабинет, говорит: — К Вам атеисты пришли, у Райских ворот стоят... — Скажи им, что меня нет.*

Translation: Saint Peter knocks at the door of God's office, saying: "Atheists have come to you. They are standing at the gates of Paradise". [God replies]: "Tell them I don't exist."

[2] *Здание клуба атеистов и церковь стоят по соседству. Так сказать, хотите верьте, хотите — нет.*

Translation: Believe it or not, the building of an atheist club and a church are next door to each other.

Here we can see that religious characters and places have lost their divinity and became more humane, making it possible to make jokes about them. Performers tend to invoke various cultural elements that are artistically exaggerated (as is the case here with religion) to construct their field of speech, because they know these elements will resonate with the audience and add an additional flavor to their performance.

Besides, the use of body language assists in the construction of the linguistic field. Russians tend to use body language in everyday conversation, and this characteristic is amplified on stage. Almost every performer uses body language (often unintentionally) to complement verbal activities, attracting the audience's attention and visualizing the expression of things, thus better constructing the context. It is important to note that body language is different from acting. While the former often serves only a supporting role, the latter itself usually aims to amuse the audience through exaggerated behaviors.

The Influence of the Method of Performing Stand-up Comedy

One of the characteristics of stand-up comedy is that there is only one performer, which makes it necessary for the comedian to switch between the objective and the subjective point of view when constructing the register, thus causing a shift in field, diverting the audience's attention from the original topic, and then amusing them with comedic elements independent from the previous text (Redozubov, 2010). An example is the sports bar discussion above, where the already humorous phrase "fitness burger" is followed by the additional line "Who are we deceiving?". At the same time, sarcasm, a common technique in stand-up comedy, also has its impact on register, which is characterized by the use of exaggerated words and antithesis, expressing ideas from the opposite side while constructing the discourse domain and thus bring a certain sense of freshness to the audience. The expression "more than a thousand years" used in discussion of medical and veterinary education above is already humorous enough, and the contrast between the long years of medical study and the little knowledge gained makes people laugh even harder.

The role that the stage itself plays in the performance of a stand-up comedy is also worth analyzing. In stand-up comedy, the actors interact with the audience from time to time and use this as a way to amuse them, and the theme of the show is often close enough to the audience's lives so as to resonate with them. Such a format blurs the distinction between audience and performers, allowing the audience to live the show as if it were a carnival, with the performers on stage saying what they are thinking. In the case of *Standup*, one manifestation of its carnivalization is the vulgarization of the actors' language (Bakhtin, 1998). Many of the actors use words that need to be censored when they are in the throes of emotion, and the use of such vulgar words, often between more intimate interlocutors, might be described as a tenor deviation.

Through this deviation, social conventions are broken on stage, a temporary carnival ritual is constructed, and people laugh together in the process.

Conclusion

In this article, we have summarized some possible ways of generation of verbal humor through the qualitative analysis of language materials. Based on this, we have analyzed the two main reasons behind it. While verifying that the register theory can help to explain verbal humor, we have also gained an understanding of Russian culture from a novel perspective. Due to the limit of time and energy, this research only uses the corpus of the ninth season of *STANDUP* and does not carefully consider the differences between register switching, register blending, and register borrowing, so it only exposes the tip of the iceberg of the characteristics that cause humor due to register deviation. However, we believe that our study contributes to a better understanding of the unique Russian culture of humor from multiple perspectives including linguistic, cultural, literal and so on.

References

- Bakhtin, M. (1998). *The complete works of Bakhtin (Vol. 6)*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Education Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An introduction to functional grammar* (1st ed.). London: Edward Arnold.
- Lukin, A., Moore, A., Herke, M., Wegener, R., & Wu, C. (2011). Halliday's model of register revisited and explored. *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*, 4(10), 1558/lhs.v4i2.187.
- Hu, Z., Zhu, Y., & Zhang, D. (1989). *Introduction to systemic functional grammar*. Hunan: Hunan Education Press.
- Redozubov, A. D. (2010). On the nature of humor. *SPb.*, 52 p.
- Shore, S. (2015). Register in systemic functional linguistics. Asif, Agha, & Frog, (Eds.), *Registers of Communications*, vol. 18, pp. 54-76. Finnish Literature Society.
- Zeina, M. R., Koshman, L. V., & Shulgin, V. S. (1990). *History of Russian culture*, (p. 431). Moscow.
- Zhang, N. (2021). A study on deviation in the language domain of "Happy Comedian". Master's Thesis, Northeast Normal University.
- Zheng, Y. (2016). The humorous function of deviation in the perspective of evaluation theory. *Foreign Language Journal*, (02), 28-31.

A Corpus-based Comparative Study on the Reading Text Difficulty of Two German Examinations: PGH and TestDaF¹

Jingxi Yang, Yuan Li*

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3200103290@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] This research conducts a comparative analysis of reading text difficulty between the Examination for Chinese German Advanced Students (PGH) and the international Test of German as a Foreign Language (TestDaF). It examines differences in lexical and syntactic complexity as well as stylistics and readability. Two corpora were compiled and a measuring system was designed accordingly. Findings indicate that TestDaF reading texts pose a greater challenge for comprehension than the PGH reading texts, due to the use of a much wider range of vocabulary, more extensive coverage of different topics, more complex sentence structures, and diminished readability. Consequently, TestDaF candidates are advised to improve their vocabulary by incorporating a wider variety of vocabulary from diverse academic and non-academic topics. Additionally, it is recommended to put a clear emphasis on facilitating students' ability to analyze complex syntax to better comprehend unfamiliar sentence structures when taking the TestDaF exam.

[Keywords] corpus-based analysis; PGH; TestDaF; difficulty of reading texts

Introduction

Presently, an increasing number of Chinese individuals are embracing the pursuit of studying German. In the same vein, there is a substantial influx of Chinese students seeking higher education in Germany. According to the annual report from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), in the winter semester of 2020/2021, 40,122 Chinese students opted to study in Germany, accounting for a dominant 12.4% of the international student population.² TestDaF is an internationally standardized language examination assessing German proficiency for non-native German speakers wishing to enroll in German universities. PGH constitutes the highest level of German proficiency examination in China. Given the necessity for many learners to undertake both these tests, the comparison of these two examinations carries significant implications for research.

The crucial role of reading comprehension in language proficiency exams is widely recognized and deserving of dedicated research. The reading text difficulty bears implications for the overall test difficulty and moderately influences candidates' scores (Wang & Gu, 2020). Therefore, a holistic understanding of text difficulty in language examinations provides instructive recommendations for learners and teachers engaged in examination preparation.

Throughout the existing research literature (refer to Section 2), a vast amount of research on reading texts in English language examinations can be observed, while there is a dearth of attention given to reading texts in German examinations. This research aims to fill this gap by comparing the reading text difficulty between the PGH in China and the international TestDaF at the same proficiency level.

¹Achievement of the research project "Construction of the Chinese German Learner Corpus and Research on the Development of Their Writing Competence" (20BYY103).

*Corresponding author. Email address: liyuan1972@zju.edu.cn

²Source: Federal Statistical Office, student statistics; DZHW calculations

The research question is: Are there differences in the difficulty of reading texts between PGH and TestDaF? This question can be subdivided into three sub-questions: Are there differences in 1) the lexical features, 2) the syntactic features, and 3) concerning text stylistics and readability of the reading texts? To answer these questions, we compiled two corpora and employed quantitative methodologies to compare the reading texts from both German proficiency examinations.

Literature Review

A variety of studies in linguistics have explored different foreign language proficiency exams, which aid in the improvement of teaching and learning strategies. Among the areas that have received considerable attention are the comparative analyses of different foreign language examinations in English, Russian, German, French, and Spanish (Zhou, 2015; Cheng, 2021; Kong et al., 2014; Ding, 2019). In terms of German proficiency examinations, researchers have discussed the characteristics of examinations for German-major students in China (Kong et al., 2014). Weng (2016) comprehensively analyzes the similarities and differences among the three international entrance exams for foreign candidates applying to German universities - DSH, TestDaF and FSP. However, there is limited scholarship that explores the comparison between Mainland Chinese and international German proficiency examinations.

Previous studies investigating reading text difficulty have primarily centered on English proficiency examinations. The difficulty of reading texts across English examinations like CET 4, CET6, IELTS and TOEFL (Liu & Chen, 2013; Jiang & Han, 2018; Wang & Gu, 2020) were analyzed and compared, which provides novel ideas and methodologies for the comparative analysis of reading texts in foreign language proficiency examinations. However, specialized research comparing the reading text difficulty in other foreign languages like German proficiency examinations is limited.

The difficulty of reading texts refers to the extent to which a text is challenging to read and comprehend (McNamara et al., 2014). In the beginning, researchers focused on easily measurable characteristics like the length of words and sentences as a means of assessing readability. Since then, several readability formulas have been devised to gauge the readability of English texts (Best, 2006). One of the most reputable readability formulas, the Flesch Reading Ease index, was adapted for German usage in 1978 and is known as the Amstad-Formel. Other widely acknowledged readability formulas utilized for German texts are the SMOG index and the LIX readability index (Hansen-Schirra & Gutermuth, 2019). However, measuring text difficulty solely based on word and sentence length offers incomplete insight. Hence, scholars suggested analyzing them from a linguistic feature perspective. Lexical variety and density (Lu, 2012) and word frequency (Just & Carpenter, 1980) are significant indicators for measuring complexity at the lexical level. Furthermore, there are many indicators for texts in the syntactic dimension. The most representative system of syntactic indicators for evaluating the readability of German texts is the Common Text Analysis Platform (CTAP) system, including 160 syntactic and phrasal indicators, as well as 400 indicators related to lexicon, pragmatics, etc. (Weiss & Meurers, 2018).

There are some researches investigating the level of text difficulty in German reading texts. A firm grasp of text difficulty can help identify appropriate teaching materials and strategies for enhancing students' learning outcomes (Berendes et al., 2018). However, specific research on the difficulty of texts in examinations still constitutes an understudied field of inquiry and is thus poorly understood.

Based on the measuring systems introduced above from previous research, this research applies a modified measuring system to compare and analyze the difficulty of reading comprehension texts from

both the Mainland Chinese designed German language proficiency examination PGH as well as the German proficiency examination TestDaF.

Materials and Methods

Compiling the Corpora

Two corpora were compiled separately. Firstly, the PGH corpus consists of 14 PGH exam texts from the years 2015 to 2022, excluding the year 2020 due to the pandemic. This corpus comes with 6008 tokens. Secondly, the TestDaF corpus was compiled from 14 TestDaF reading comprehension texts from 7 sample papers officially released by the TestDaF Examiner's Office and comes with a total of 8019 tokens. Since reading comprehension 1 (LV1) in TestDaF contains the matching task and cannot be compared with the PGH reading texts, only the texts in reading comprehension 2 (LV2) and reading comprehension 3 (LV3) were selected for each set. The data collection involved scanning the reading texts, which were then converted to TXT files. Manual corrections were made during this conversion process. Subsequently, all texts were subjected to linguistic data cleaning, which included the standardization of the text format and the removal of unnecessary blank lines.

Measuring System

To address the research questions outlined above, this study combined previous researches to devise a measuring system that includes indicators at three dimensions: 1) lexical features, 2) syntactic features, and 3) stylistics and readability. Aiming to measure these linguistic indicators, the software AntConc 3.5.9w., the Common Text Analysis Platform (CTAP) system, Digital Dictionary of the German Language (DWDS) corpus and the calculation website of LIX index are utilized.

1) The indicators of lexical features to be measured are: lexical diversity, high frequency content words and their frequency of occurrence, lexical density (lexical words per word) and the average number of syllables per word. To quantify lexical diversity, the application of Guiraud's index was utilized, esteemed for its enhanced reliability compared to other Type-Token Ratio computations (Håkansson Ramberg, 2016). Guiraud's index is calculated as the ratio of lexical types to the square root of the number of lexical tokens.

Type, Token and Guiraud's index are measured by AntConc 3.5.9w. A compendium of common German function words was incorporated in AntConc 3.5.9w to identify high frequency content words and distinguish primary thematic elements across different analyses. Word frequency was represented using DWDS corpus, while lexical density and average number of syllables per word were measured using the CTAP system.

2) The indicators of syntactic features include: the number of sentences, average sentence length, average clause length, average length of T-unit, complex T-unit per sentence, and sentence complexity ratio. All these syntactic indicators are addressed by the CTAP system.

3) Regarding stylistic and readability dimensions, the Reiss' model was introduced to assess the texts within both corpora, discerning their respective levels of difficulty. According to Reiss (1982), text stylistics and difficulty can be defined by using five indicators, each consisting of four levels. This scoring model is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Indicators and Levels of the Scoring Model of Reiss.*

Indicator	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Thematic content	Generally cross-culture	Generally culture-specific	Specifically cross-culture	Specifically culture-specific
Stylistics	Standardized	Everyday	Technical social dialect	Personal
Linguistic function	Informative	Informative with resonance	Resonant	Persuasive
Pragmatics	Generic	Collective	Grouped	Individual
Historical and cultural context	Both temporally and culturally similar	Culturally similar but temporally distant	Temporally similar but culturally distant	Both temporally and culturally distant

However, since the model only categorizes each indicator into four levels and the scoring approach is subjective, we included the LIX formula in the investigation, which can be objectively computed. Higher LIX index values indicate lower readability of the text. The LIX readability rating is divided into four levels: below 40 (children’s literature), 40 to 50 (fiction), 50 to 60 (non-fiction), over 60 (professional literature).

In this research, the stylistics of each text in corpora is manually and objectively scored based on the Reiss’ model. The LIX index assessment is carried out by inserting the text into the text field on the website dedicated to calculating the LIX index³ to obtain the relevant data.

Results

Lexical Features

Table 2 presents the data about the lexical features within both corpora, encompassing Guiraud’s index, lexical words per word, and average token length in syllables.

Table 2. *Comparison of Lexical Features of the Texts in PGH and TestDaF*

Article	Corpus	
	PGH	TestDaF
Type	2192	2836
Token	6008	8019
Guiraud’s index	77.511	89.549
Lexical words per word	0.559	0.565
Average token length in syllables	1.975	2.059

The DWDS corpus is labeled with the word frequency of each word on a scale of 1 to 6, signifying occurrences from infrequent to frequent. From each corpus, we extract the top 20 most frequently appearing words and listed their frequency grades assessed in DWDS. The results in Tables 2 and 3 will be discussed in the next section.

³Lenhard, W. & Lenhard, A. (2014-2022). Berechnung des Lesbarkeitsindex LIX nach Björnson. Verfügbar unter: <http://www.psychometrica.de/lix.html>.

Table 3. *The Most Frequent Words in the Corpora and their Frequency.*

PGH corpus		TestDaF corpus	
Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
<i>Prozent (percent)</i>	6	<i>Pflanzen (plants)</i>	4
<i>EU (the EU)</i>	5	<i>Erdbeben (earthquakes)</i>	4
<i>Deutschland (Germany)</i>	6	<i>Menschen (people)</i>	6
<i>Jahr (year)</i>	6	<i>Vergessen (forget)</i>	5
<i>Menschen (people)</i>	6	<i>Kinder (children)</i>	6
<i>CO2 (carbon dioxide)</i>	3	<i>Tag (day)</i>	6
<i>Kinder (children)</i>	6	<i>Wissenschaft (science)</i>	5
<i>Euro (euro)</i>	6	<i>Zeit (time)</i>	6
<i>Fähigkeiten (abilities)</i>	5	<i>Informationen (information)</i>	5
<i>Google (google)</i>	4	<i>Jahre (years)</i>	6
<i>Behälter (containers)</i>	4	<i>Deutschland (Germany)</i>	6
<i>geht (goes)</i>	6	<i>Stunden (hours)</i>	3
<i>sagt (says)</i>	6	<i>Uhr (clock)</i>	6
<i>Test (test)</i>	5	<i>Leben (life)</i>	5
<i>Autos (cars)</i>	5	<i>Duft (scent)</i>	4
<i>europäischen (European)</i>	5	<i>Papier (paper)</i>	5
<i>Freunde (friends)</i>	5	<i>Autobahn (highway)</i>	4
<i>Gefühl (feeling)</i>	5	<i>Energie (energy)</i>	5
<i>Kakerlaken (cockroaches)</i>	3	<i>Flächen (surfaces)</i>	5
<i>Kandidaten (candidates)</i>	4	<i>Tiere (animals)</i>	5
Average	5	Average	4.5

Syntactic Features

The syntactic features of the two corpora compared in this study are presented in Table 4, with further details elucidated in the subsequent discussion.

Table 4. *Comparison of Syntactic Features of the Texts in PGH and TestDaF.*

Article	Corpus	
	PGH	TestDaF
Number of sentences	386	461
Average sentence length	15.624	17.469
Average clause length	10.750	11.537
Average T-unit length	18.847	19.083
Complex T-unit per sentence	0.458	0.509
The ratio of sentence complexity	1.537	1.551

Text Stylistics and Readability

Applying the Reiss' model, a total of 14 texts from each corpus underwent independent appraisal in 5 indicators (refer to section 3) and were assigned scores ranging from 1 to 4, corresponding to levels 1 to 4. Similarly, the LIX index was separately calculated for 14 texts from each corpus.

The average values of the Reiss assessment and LIX index for the texts from each corpus are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. *The Average Values of the Reiss' Model and LIX Index of the Texts in PGH and TestDaF.*

Article		Corpus	
		PGH	TestDaF
Reiss' model	Thematic content	2.36	2.57
	Stylistics	2.07	2.86
	Linguistic function	1.57	1.93
	Pragmatics	1.79	1.93
	Historical and cultural context	2	2
LIX index		48.58 (fiction)	53.6 (non-fiction)

Discussion

Lexical Features

There are similarities and differences between PGH and TestDaF in terms of lexical features. The concept of lexical density was initially introduced by Ure in 1971, who categorized a text with a lexical density of 40% or more as written text. Lexical density refers to the proportion of real words in a discourse. The greater the lexical density, the more information is conveyed by the materials and the higher the level of written text is (Ure, 1971). Based on Table 2, there is minimal variance in the vocabulary densities of PGH and TestDaF (0.559 vs. 0.565), suggesting that as written texts, the two examinations are comparable in terms of formality.

The main differences between the two corpora are lexical diversity, average word length and the high frequency content words as well as their frequency. The greater the lexical diversity, the more probable it is that unfamiliar words will interfere with the examinee's comprehension of the text, which is also indicative of a higher level of text difficulty. The diversity in vocabulary value of the TestDaF texts was higher than that of the PGH (89.549 vs. 77.511). We hypothesize that two factors contribute to this situation: The TestDaF reading texts cover a wider range of topics, in which there are many compound words, such as *Kulturstaatsminister* (Germany's minister of state for culture) and *Expertenmeinung* (expert opinion) from the second text of the TestDaF corpus. At the same time, the TestDaF reading texts often describe the research content and results of a particular academic discipline, resulting in a more technical vocabulary.

The average word length also affects the difficulty of vocabulary. TestDaF (2.059) has a slightly higher value than PGH (1.975), which to some extent supports the above assumption that there are more compound words in TestDaF. Additionally, international language exams tend to have longer average word lengths than language exams in China, which is consistent with He's findings that the average word length of IELTS reading texts is longer than that of TEM8 (He, 2013).

Table 3 lists the 20 most common words found in both corpora. In the PGH reading texts, the top spot words deal with current political affairs or refer to ecological topics, such as the European Union and carbon dioxide. While, the TestDaF reading texts cover a broader range of subjects, such as air and air pollution, highways, and children. A comparison of the average values of word frequency for the top 20 words in the two corpora reveals that the PGH corpus has a higher value (5), indicating a higher frequency of occurrence. In contrast, the TestDaF corpus had a relatively lower value (4.5). As a result, the probability of a low-frequency word, which can be difficult for examinees, appearing in a TestDaF reading text is higher. Similarly, He's study also pointed out that TEM8 has a wider lexical coverage of

high frequency words while the lexical coverage of low frequency words in texts of IELTS is denser than that of TEM8 (He, 2013).

Overall, TestDaF proved to be more challenging than PGH in terms of lexical features, owing to its greater lexical diversity, longer average word length, and relatively less frequent use of the 20 most common words.

Syntactic Features

Table 4 reveals that the average sentence length of the TestDaF reading texts (17.469) is slightly longer than that of the PGH texts (15.624). There are also substantially more sentences in the TestDaF texts, with 461 compared to 386 in PGH. Moreover, the length of clauses is an indicator of the text's complexity. Written German is notorious for its extensive use of clauses, sometimes even with multiple subordinate clauses. Having a lot of longer subordinate clauses could be a hindrance to understanding the text. The average sentence length in TestDaF (11.537) is greater than in PGH (10.750), indicating that the sentence structure in TestDaF may be more complex. The difficulty of syntactic structure in the TestDaF can be attributed to the German language's tendency towards complex syntax in written academic, scientific, and technical texts, which serves to enhance precision in expression.

From a syntactic perspective, the syntax of TEM8 is more intricate than that of IELTS (He, 2013). Whereas, according to the data in Table 4, the syntax of PGH is simpler than that of TestDaF. Our findings are consistent with previous research in terms of lexical features. But differences in research methods can result in different indicator characteristics for international and domestic language proficiency examinations of different languages. Therefore, it is not possible to make generalizations. Nevertheless, suggestions for improving the study of the German language exam can be derived from the indicators measured and the instruments used in the studies of English language examinations.

Text Stylistics and Readability

Assessing the two corpus texts according to Reiss' model reveals both similarities and differences in text style, *cf.* Table 5. On the one hand, the average value of the "historical and cultural context" indicator in both corpora is 2, and most of the texts are located in a similar time but culturally distant, which can be attributed to the tendency of examiners to select recent articles and present the latest news and study reports.

On the other hand, the TestDaF corpus shows slightly higher values than the PGH for thematic content indicators (2.57 vs. 2.36). The PGH texts mostly center around universal topics like politics and environment but with specific references to situations in Germany. In contrast, TestDaF texts cover diverse and specific topics such as the study of plants, earthquakes or energy, but they are presented with a rather global perspective. Furthermore, from a stylistic perspective, the TestDaF texts tend to be at Level 3 while the PGH texts are at Level 2. This is because the TestDaF texts frequently concentrate on presenting various studies on a specific topic like neurological science, thereby containing a more technical and scientific language. While the PGH texts feature a more standardized, restricted and easily accessible language. The difference in readability between PGH and TestDaF texts is further corroborated by the average LIX index of the two corpora, with the value of TestDaF corpus at the third level (53.6), which is higher than the value of PGH (48.58), suggesting that TestDaF is less readable and the text is more difficult.

Implications

Both examinations require a C1 or higher level, but it is clear that TestDaF reading texts are more challenging than those of PGH. This is because TestDaF reading texts contain a wider range of vocabulary and topics, along with more intricate sentence structures.

Studienweg, the German textbook used by most Chinese learners, primarily covers everyday topics such as food and entertainment. In terms of discourse type, it is usually dialogues, narratives and argumentative essays with natural and straightforward language. In contrast, the reading texts of TestDaF often contain topics related to social life, such as environmental protection and socializing. Scientific research reports written in technical language are often chosen for their academic and professional style, which Chinese learners are less exposed to in their early learning. *Einblick*, the textbook that some Chinese universities use in the third and fourth years of tertiary education, covers a wide range of topics, including study, work, politics, economics, social issues, and science and technology in both Germany and China, thus providing adequate reading material for students preparing for the PGH. However, it should be noted that TestDaF reading texts tend to be more technical and scientific in content and are more likely to use jargon to present research content and findings. So *Einblick* cannot be used as a reference material that corresponds to TestDaF reading texts in terms of topic selection and text structure. According to Weng's (2016) research on international German language exams, the source materials for TestDaF texts come from real world references, prioritizing authenticity. Both listening and reading texts are selected from real world newspaper articles or magazines. Conversely, Chinese domestic language proficiency examinations often fall short in terms of linguistic authenticity due to predetermined vocabulary requirements.

For these reasons, students preparing for the PGH may find the texts in the textbook *Einblick* to be useful references for targeted knowledge expansion. While those preparing for TestDaF are encouraged to look for additional reading material outside the classroom and concentrate on authentic texts from journals, newspapers and the media. Furthermore, it is important to acquire a broad vocabulary across various subjects to effectively comprehend texts spanning diverse topics. In addition, a clear emphasis should be put on facilitating knowledge of grammar and syntax as to assist with the reading comprehension of complex sentence structures. Moreover, instructors should provide instructions on linguistic components and word formation to enhance students' ability to understand unfamiliar vocabulary. Complementing learning of vocabulary, grammar and syntax, instructors can judiciously heighten the difficulty of reading materials, prompting students to engage with diverse subjects using specialized language for academic purposes, thereby broadening their horizons.

Conclusion

Considering the growing number of German language learners in China and Chinese students studying in Germany, this paper aims to offer a better understanding of German proficiency examinations, specifically on the difficulty levels of reading comprehension texts. In this study, we identified and compared the level of difficulty of PGH and TestDaF reading texts in terms of lexical features, syntactic features, and stylistic readability. The findings reveal that (1) the reading texts of TestDaF exhibit greater lexical and syntactic difficulty, making them more challenging compared to the reading texts used in PGH. (2) In terms of stylistics and readability, the language used in TestDaF demonstrates a higher degree of specialization and thematic diversity rendering it less readable than the PGH reading texts. As a consequence, test candidates and teachers should concentrate on facilitating specialized vocabulary from

a variety of different topics and scholarships. They should also place significant emphasis on analyzing complex sentence structures during their test preparation.

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how to further develop German language teaching concerning reading comprehension and exam preparation. Nevertheless, there are some limitations of this research that we hope can be addressed in the future. Firstly, the limited number of texts collected may have affected the results of the corpus-based analysis. Secondly, there are a number of other aspects that may factor in when determining the difficulty of a reading passage, such as subjective and objective elements, e.g. student-related or textual factors, respectively. This study focuses solely on one component of an examination: the reading text. Further comparative studies can be conducted on different contents of different language proficiency examinations, such as the listening texts and students' composition writing, to complement and improve said limitations.

References

- Berendes, K., Vajjala, S., Meurers, D., Bryant, D., Wagner, W., Chinkina, M., & Trautwein, U. (2018). Reading demands in secondary school: Does the linguistic complexity of textbooks increase with grade level and the academic orientation of the school track? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 110(4), 518.
- Best, K. H. (2006). Sind Wort-und Satzlänge brauchbare Kriterien zur Bestimmung der Lesbarkeit von Texten [Are word and sentence length useful criteria for determining the readability of text]? In: Wichter, Sigurd, & Busch, Albert (Hrsg.), *Wissenstransfer - Erfolgskontrolle und Rückmeldungen aus der Praxis* (S. 21-31). Frankfurt/ M. u.a.: Lang.
- Cheng, Y. (2021). *A comparative study of the intermediate written part of French DELF test and new HSK test*. (Master's thesis, Guangxi Normal University).
- Ding, S. (2019). *A comparison and analysis of Chinese new HSK and Spanish DELE. Take the intermediate written examination as an example* (Master's thesis, Suzhou University).
- Håkansson Ramberg, M. (2016). *Was bewerten Lehrer?: Die Bedeutung grammatischer und lexikalischer Faktoren bei der Benotung von Schülertexten im Fach Deutsch als Fremdsprache [What do teachers grade?: The importance of grammatical and lexical factors in grading student texts in German as a foreign language]*. (Doctoral dissertation, Linnaeus University).
- Hansen-Schirra, S., & Gutermuth, S. (2019). Empirische Überprüfung von Verständlichkeit [Empirical verification of comprehensibility]. MAAß, C., & ISABEL Rink, I., (Eds.), *Handbuch Barrierefreie Kommunikation*. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 163-182.
- He, L. Q. (2013). *A comparative study on text complexity of reading comprehension in TEM8 and IELTS based on Coh-Matrix*. (Master's thesis, Xinan University)
- Jiang, J. L., & Han, B. C. (2018). A study of reading text difficulty of CET6, TOFEL and IELTS based on Coh-Matrix. *Foreign Languages in China*, (03), 86-95.
- Just, M. A., & Carpenter, P. A. (1980). A theory of reading: From eye fixations to comprehension. *Psychological Review*, 87(4), 329.
- Kong, D. M., Liu, Y. L., & Chang, X. (2014). An overview of PGG-examination and its development. *Foreign Language Testing and Teaching*. (02), 20-31+41.
- Lenhard, W. & Lenhard, A. (2014-2022). Berechnung des Lesbarkeitsindex LIX nach Björnson [Calculation of the readability index LIX according to Björnson]. Available at: <http://www.psychometrica.de/lix.html>. Dettelbach: Psychometrica.

- Liu, B., & Chen, J. S. (2013). Language difficulty of CET-4 and CET-6 reading comprehension: A corpus-based study. *Journal of Chongqing Jiaotong University (Social Sciences Edition)*, (05), 141-144.
- Lu, X. (2012). The relationship of lexical richness to the quality of ESL learners' oral narratives. *The Modern Language Journal*, 96(2), 190-208.
- McNamara, D. S., Graesser, A. C., & Louwerse, M. M. (2012). Sources of text difficulty: Across genres and grades. *Measuring up: Advances in How We Assess Reading Ability*, 89-116.
- Reiss, K. (1982). Como averiguar o grau de dificuldade de uma tradução [How to evaluate the degree of difficulty of a translation]. *Letras de Hoje*, 17(2).
- Ure, J. (1971). Lexical density: A computational technique and some findings. *Talking about Text*, 27-48.
- Wang P. & Gu. X. D. (2020). A comparative study on the text complexity of CET 6, IELTS and TOEFL reading comprehension texts: A data mining approach. *Foreign Languages and Translation*, 27(04), 11-16
- Weiss, Z., & Meurers, D. (2018, August). Modeling the readability of German targeting adults and children: An empirically broad analysis and its cross-corpus validation. In *Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Computational Linguistics*, 303-317.
- Weng, Z. H. (2016). A comparison and enlightenment of German language tests for non-native speakers: Taking the German tests for the German university entrance as an example. *Journal of China Examinations*, (09), 59-63.
- Zhou, W. (2015). The comparison between Russian foreign Russian band 2 and Chinese Russian band 8. *Journal of Heihe University*, 6(02), 53-57.

What Happens when a Religious Icon Turns Digital: A Diachronic Approach to the Semantic Change of “Icon”

Xinyin Zhang, Bin Shao*

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 1046833575@qq.com

[Abstract] The paper examines the semantic change of the polysemous word “icon” as it transitions from its religious connotations to its present-day usage in the realm of computers and digital interfaces. Based on the data from OED, Etymonline, and COCA, this study takes a diachronic approach to explore how the meaning and cultural significance of the word has evolved over time.

[Keywords] icon; semantic change; diachronic approach; religious meaning; digital meaning

Introduction

Language is not a static entity: it continually evolves to adapt to the changing needs, beliefs, and values of society. Within this dynamic linguistic landscape, words undergo semantic shifts: that is, semasiological change, which begins with the word as a form and records the several interpretations that the word can have (Geeraerts, 2010, p. 23). Within semasiological mechanisms, there is a division between changes in denotational, referential meaning and changes in connotational meaning. According to whether the new meaning copies the semantics of another, related phrase or not, the changes in denotational meaning are separated into analogical changes and non-analogical changes. The semantic shifts in which one word “copies” the polysemy of another word fall under the category of analogical alterations. Specialization, generalization, metonymy, and metaphor make up the traditional quartet of non-analogical modifications in denotational meaning. The non-denotational semantic changes, such as pejorative change and ameliorative change, have received the greatest attention in the literature (Geeraerts, 2010, pp. 26-29). One such word that has experienced significant semasiological change is “icon”. An icon is commonly understood as a symbol or representation associated with a person, concept, or object, often carrying significant religious, digital, and more connotations. By exploring the semantic evolution of the polysemy “icon”, we can gain insights into broader socio-cultural trends and the implications of linguistic change, uncovering the factors and influences behind these transformations.

The study will utilize a corpus linguistic approach to examine how the word has evolved in various contexts and to understand the factors that have influenced its semantic development. It has been shown in several studies that there is a current trend in investigating polysemy and semantic development from a cognitive standpoint using corpus approaches. Shao (2012, pp. 21-27) zooms in on “carbon compounds” using COCA as evidence, demonstrating corpus-based methods in cognitive semantics. Glynn (2014, pp. 7-38) highlights the importance of quantitative corpus-based techniques in understanding semantic structures within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, tracing the evolution of Cognitive Semantic research related to polysemy and synonymy. Hilpert (2016, pp. 66-85) operates a diachronic corpus-based analysis of the modal auxiliary “may”, focusing on its collocational preferences based on the data from the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) and COCA. Another study explores the semasiological

* Corresponding author. Email address: binshao@zju.edu.cn

structure of the Polish verb “myśleć” (to think) concerning its prefixes by cognitive linguistic corpus-based introspective analysis based on the PWN Corpus of Polish (Fabiszak, et al., 2014, pp.223-251). By utilizing corpus methods, the study mainly deals with three research questions:

1. How has the semantic meaning of “icon” evolved over time?
2. How has the integration of technology and the rise of digital culture impacted the semantic range of “icon”?
3. How has “icon” been employed in different fields, such as art, religion, technology, and popular culture, and how have these contexts influenced its semantic evolution?

Methodology

The study uses the Online Etymology Dictionary (Etymonline), Oxford English Dictionary (OED), and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to collect data on the historical development and semantic evolution of “icon”. Etymonline is a valuable resource for studying the historical development and etymology of a word, for it provides a comprehensive collection of information on the origins, meanings, and evolution of words from various languages and time periods. This online dictionary draws from various sources, including Weekley’s “An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English”, Klein’s “A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language”, “Oxford English Dictionary” (second edition), “Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology”, Holthausen’s “Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Englischen Sprache”, and Kipfer and Chapman’s “Dictionary of American Slang” (Etymonline).

OED provides detailed definitions, etymologies, and usage examples for words and phrases from Old English to the present day. It comprises 2.5 million quotations from over 1,000 years, and it has been estimated that these contain 25–35 million words (Lindquist, 2009). OED includes not only current meanings and usages but also documents the historical development of words, including their earliest citations and any changes in meaning over time. In this research, OED also acts as a data source to figure out the different proportions of different meanings of “icon” in specific periods. Both Etymonline and OED are used to study the word “icon” from a diachronic perspective.

COCA is a large-scale and widely-used corpus that contains more than one billion words of text (25+ million words each year 1990-2019) from eight genres including spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, academic texts, TV and Movies subtitles, blogs, and other web pages. More details on this powerful resource for linguistic research and language analysis, such as corpus architecture, corpus sources, and use process, can be learned from Davies (2009, pp.159-190). COCA is typically applied to study the contemporary usage of “icon” by figuring out the sources, frequency, collocations, and proportion of different meanings in different periods.

Results

The word “icon”, also spelled as “ikon”, originated in 1572 in the writing of John Bossewell and initially referred to an image, figure, picture, or statue. It was derived from the Late Latin term “icon”, which in turn came from the Greek word “eikon”, denoting a likeness, image, portrait, or the reflection of an image in a mirror. When semantic changes add new meanings without removing the previous one, polysemy comes into being (Denning, et al., 2023, p.167). Icon as a polysemy perfectly displays its variations in meaning as manifested in Table 1. The senses are collected from OED.

Table 1. Main Senses of “Icon” from OED

The Main Senses of “Icon”	The Earliest Citation of the Sense
image	1572
a representation of a sacred personage in the Orthodox Church	1833
a simile or a comparison using imagery in rhetoric/ a type of sign or representation that shares similarity or analogy with the subject it signifies in philosophy	1589/1914
a realistic representation or description in writing	1579
a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol	1952

Five Senses of “Icon”

“Icon” as “an image” has three specific senses. “Icon” originally referred to an image, figure, or representation, particularly in books describing animals, plants, and natural history subjects. This usage is no longer widely recognized in contemporary English. Early instances of this usage can be traced back to 1572, as indicated in (1), where icon means a representation or depiction of a bird’s form, signifying a general sense of a visual representation. It also means an image in the solid, a monumental figure, or a statue, which first appeared in 1587 in *Holinshed’s Chronicles*. Described in (2), “ikon”, referring to statues or images that were erected to honor Saint Thomas, describes solid images, statues, or monumental figures rather than the earlier obsolete meaning related to pictures or illustrations in books. Then, “icon” expands its sense of a small symbolic picture of a physical object on a computer screen, which was first recorded in 1982 in the newspaper *Computerworld* as manifested from (3). “Icon” pertains to a graphical representation used to represent a file, folder, program, or function on a computer system or user interface.

(1) *The Icon, or forme of the same birde, I haue caused thus to bee figured. (1572)*

(2) *The pope meant by causing such ikons to be erected, to prefer Thomas as a perpetuall saint to all posterities. (1587)*

(3) *Star’s screen displays black characters on a white background. These are known as icons on the Star and are equivalent to the familiar physical object in an office. (1982)*

In the Orthodox Church, “icon” refers to a representation of a sacred personage, typically in the form of a painting, bas-relief, or mosaic, honored with worship and adoration. This specific sense related to the Eastern Church emerged in English in 1833, as seen in Robert Pinkerton’s *Russia* in (4), which discussed “ikons” as religious images or holy pictures in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Described in 1877 as shown in (5), these icons, depicting the Saviour, Madonna, or saints, followed an archaic Byzantine style and typically featured a yellow or gold background. In Orthodox Christianity, icons play a crucial role in religious devotion and are utilized for worship, contemplation, and connecting with the spiritual realm, serving as sacred representations of the divine.

(4) *Behind them were carried...six censers, and six sacred ikons. (1833)*

(5) *Icons are pictorial half-length representations of the Saviour, of the Madonna, or of a saint, executed in archaic Byzantine style, on a yellow or gold ground... (1877)*

“Icon” also has a special meaning in rhetoric and philosophy. In rhetoric, “icon” refers to a simile or a comparison using imagery, as described in (6) from *Arte of English Poesie*, and it highlights the use of icons to create resemblances through vivid imagery. Similarly, Thomas Hobbes wrote down (7) in the translator’s preface to *Iliad*, that ancient writers referred to “icones” as descriptions that evoked vivid mental images. However, this sense is now outdated. In philosophy, “icon” refers to a type of sign that

shares similarity or analogy with the subject it signifies. According to Charles Sanders Peirce, the “diagrammatic sign or icon” is one of the three essential types of signs, as exhibited in (8). “Icon” represents its object by possessing some common characteristic with the object. For instance, a color-card that resembles the color of an object is considered an icon.

(6) *Icon, or resemblance by imagerie. (1589)*

(7) *The perfection and curiosity of descriptions, which the ancient writers of eloquence call icones, that is images. (1676)*

(8) *It has been found that there are three kinds of signs which are all indispensable in all reasoning; the first is the diagrammatic sign or icon, which exhibits a similarity or analogy to the subject of discourse. (1914)*

“Icon” alludes to a realistic representation or description in writing, which dates back to 1579. In 1852, Tait’s *Edinburgh Magazine* stated that a good book is a “perfect icon” as illustrated in (9), which means a well-written book is a faithful and accurate representation of nature and human life. Nevertheless, this sense is now considered obsolete.

(9) *A good book is a perfect icon, a faithful picture and representation of nature and human life. (1852)*

“Icon” carrying the sense of “a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol” can be applied to various persons, institutions, or cultural symbols to denote their significance within a specific context, the meaning of which can be traced back to 1952 in (10), where “icon” refers to a national icon deeply ingrained in American culture, or a novel seen as a prominent cultural artifact. In 2000, Jodie Foster, Susan Sarandon, and Jamie Lee Curtis were described as Hollywood’s female gay icons, as displayed in (11). “Icon” here is used to identify representative individuals who have become symbols of representation and inspiration within the LGBTQ+ community.

(10) *‘The Diamond as Big as the Ritz’, the work of a high-spirited young man turning a critical eye upon a national icon, satirically fabulizes the American Mr. Moneybags. (1952)*

(11) *Hollywood’s female gay icons Jodie Foster, Susan Sarandon and Jamie Lee Curtis. (2000)*

The Semasiological Change of “Icon” in the Digital Age

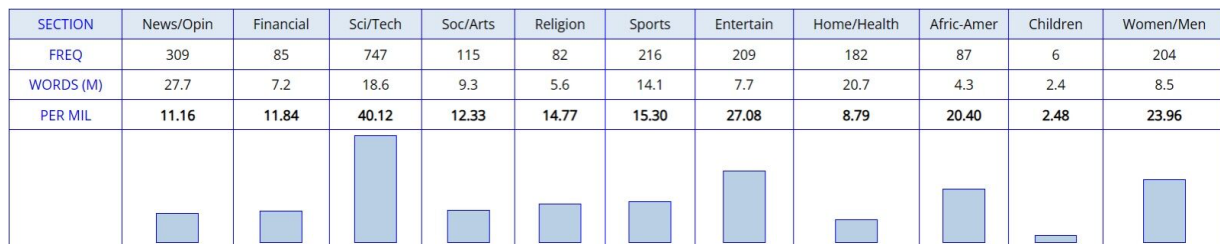
The time-honored history of “icon” has witnessed the fading of religious icons. Humans are capable of managing their speech experience, both in learning a language initially and in modifying their language usage patterns based on ongoing experiences (William & Kretzschmar, 2009, p. 64). The meaning “image” has remained dominant in defining the overall meaning, starting from its first appearance in 1572. “Icon” initially meant “image, figure, or representation” and has evolved to encompass various meanings, including computer screen symbols, sacred figures, a representation with similarity to the subject it signifies, or a realistic representation in writing. Nevertheless, some of these meanings, like the sense of “a simile in rhetoric” or “a realistic written description”, have gradually become rare.

“Icon” has transcended its exclusive association with religious imagery and acquired broader usage and meanings over time. It was initially employed primarily in religious contexts to describe sacred images or representations of deities, particularly within the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition of the Byzantine Empire. During the Byzantine Empire (4th to 15th century), icons were highly revered religious objects believed to embody divine presence and used for worship and veneration. However, during the Protestant

Reformation in the 16th century, iconoclasm led to the destruction of religious icons as religious icons were seen as promoting idolatry, which marked a significant change in how “icon” was perceived, particularly in Western religious contexts.

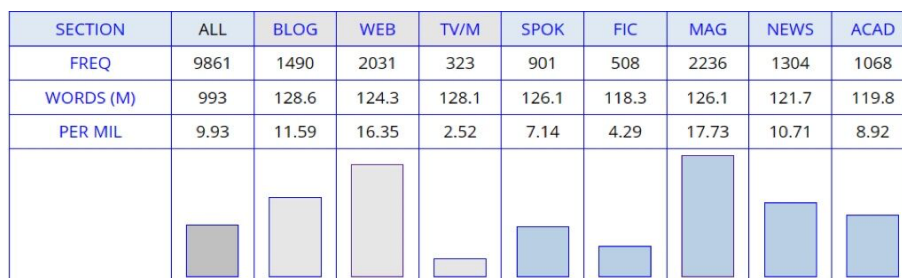
The rise of digital technology in the late 20th century expanded the usage of “icon” beyond religious contexts. It became prevalent in popular culture, art, design, and media. Individuals achieving notable success and influence are now termed as pop culture, fashion, or sports icons. The term is also employed by artists, designers, and theorists to describe figures, works, or symbols with exceptional cultural or historical significance, such as Leonardo da Vinci and the Mona Lisa being considered as icons of the Renaissance period.

Figure 1. “Icon” in Magazine from COCA



The popularity of “icon” as a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol can be demonstrated by the rise of entertainment and fashion. In the context of magazines, “icon” is associated with science, technology, and entertainment, as well as women and men. Magazines often tend to feature articles on iconic individuals, whether in the realms of entertainment, fashion, or culture. Therefore, “icon” refers to influential symbols widely recognized within specific industries, particularly in entertainment. While the religious meaning of “icon” still exists, particularly within Eastern Orthodox Christian traditions, the term has expanded its semantic scope to encompass a wider range of technological connotations. Then, with the rise of graphical user interfaces (GUI) and computer systems, “icon” started to be associated with pictorial representations used to signify functions, applications, or files on computer screens. Users rely on these icons to quickly navigate and interact with digital interfaces, reflecting their more general meaning as visual representations that convey meaning or signify specific actions.

Figure 2. “Icon” in Different Genres from COCA



According to Figure 2, “icon” has become more prevalent in digital and media-related contexts, including magazines, websites, and blogs. While its use has expanded in these domains due to digital and media developments, it also has broader applications. For instance, “icon” is frequently used in the science and technology part of a magazine as indicated in Figure 1. Similarly, in web design and development, icons are essential for user interfaces, allowing for intuitive navigation and interaction. In the realm of blogs

and online content, icons convey information, engage readers, or provide visual cues, representing social media sharing options, categories or tags, or specific content types (such as videos) within blog posts. Furthermore, the usage of “icon” is not limited to digital and media contexts. It is prevalent in various fields, including TV, spoken, fiction, and academy.

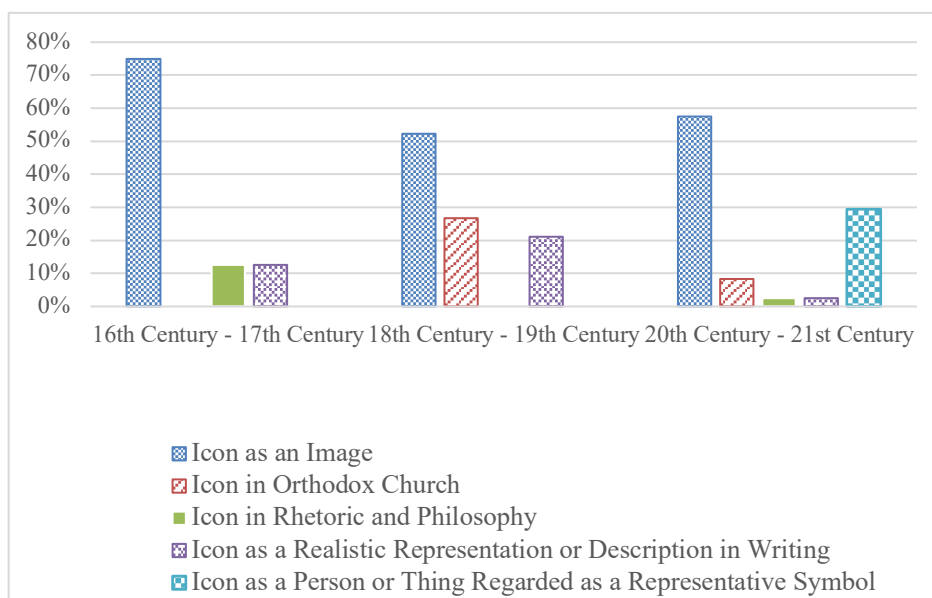
Table 2. *The Collocation of “Icon” from COCA*

	Same text	Word	PoS	Topics	Collocates
1	209	click	v	Topics	Collocates
2	177	button	n	Topics	Collocates
3	174	desktop	n	Topics	Collocates
4	164	browser	n	Topics	Collocates
5	157	menu	n	Topics	Collocates
6	157	tab	n	Topics	Collocates
7	150	app	n	Topics	Collocates
8	147	interface	n	Topics	Collocates
9	147	screen	n	Topics	Collocates
10	144	folder	n	Topics	Collocates
11	140	click	n	Topics	Collocates
12	137	keyboard	n	Topics	Collocates
13	136	user	n	Topics	Collocates
14	129	select	v	Topics	Collocates
15	129	type	v	Topics	Collocates

The collocations “click, button, app, interface, etc.” all suggest that icons are visual representations used to represent functions, actions, or concepts in computer software, applications (apps), and user interfaces. For instance, “click” suggests that icons are often interactive elements that users can click on to perform certain actions. “Button” further emphasizes that icons enable users to trigger actions within software or applications. “App” and “interface” highlight “icons” in the design of digital applications and user interfaces: it allows users to quickly identify and access specific functionalities. These collocations indicate that icons provide a visual language that enhances user experience, aids navigation, and communicates information efficiently in the digital realm.

The shift of “icon” from religious to technological usage signifies the ever-expanding influence of technology and its integration into our daily lives. However, this also raises questions about the intersection of spirituality, symbolism, and technology, with traditionalists concerned about the dilution of religious meaning. Yet, it invites exploration into the ways technology reshapes our understanding of symbolism, representation, and the potential for new forms of meaning-making. Based on an analysis of 145 quotation texts in OED, each particular period in history witnesses one different meaning of “icon” prevailing. According to Figure 3, the basic meaning of “an image” is always the central meaning in each period. The sense of “a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol” rockets during the 20th century and 21st century. A religious icon is decreasing, by comparing its frequency between the 18th to 19th centuries and the 20th to 21st centuries. In addition, during the 18th to 19th centuries, “icon” in rhetoric and philosophy almost disappeared, since “icon” in rhetoric became obsolete. The figure also witnesses that “icon” as a realistic representation or description in writing rose first, then declined, and is now in a low frequency of use.

Figure 3. The Proportion of Each Meaning in Different Periods



Discussion

Analyzing “icon” is a study of semasiological change. Semasiology focuses on the mapping of form to function and is concerned with how a given lexical item acquires a new meaning, as the following formula where “L”, “M” and “Form” respectively refer to form–meaning pair “lexeme”, “meaning” and “a cover term for syntax and phonology” (Traugott & Dasher, 2002, pp. 25-26):

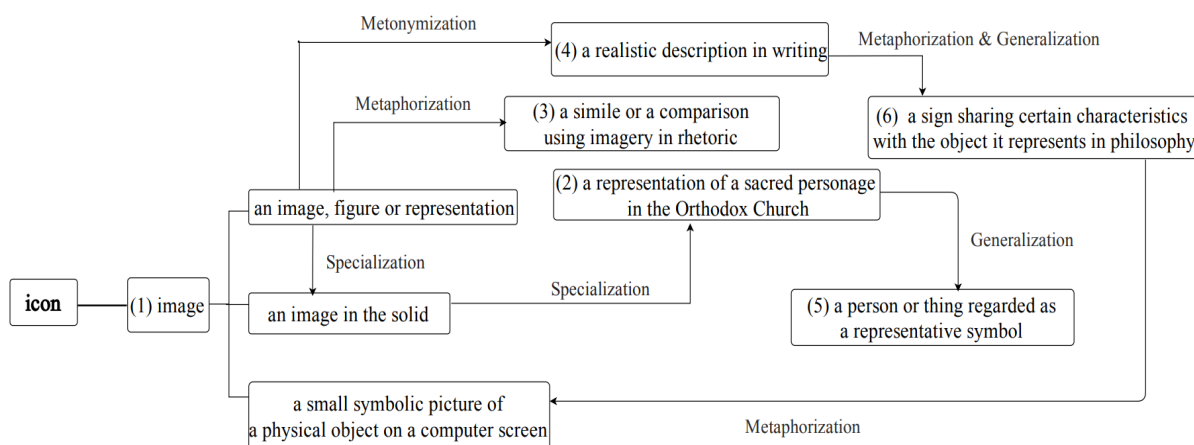
Figure 4. Polysemy due to Semasiological Change (Traugott & Dasher, 2002, p. 25)

$$L \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \text{Form} \\ M_1 \end{bmatrix} > L \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \text{Form} \\ M_1 + M_2 \end{bmatrix}$$

This formula illustrates how the meaning M of L undergoes and how the polysemy develops. The polysemy “icon” could be schematically represented as “an image in the solid > a representation of a sacred personage in the Orthodox Church > a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol”, “an image, figure or representation > a simile or a comparison using imagery in rhetoric”, and “an image, figure or representation > a realistic description in writing > a sign that shares similarity with the subject it signifies in philosophy > a small symbolic picture of a physical object on a computer screen”.

One area of semasiology is “qualitative” semasiology, which focuses on the meanings of individual words and explores the semantic connections between different senses of a word, including metaphor and metonymy (Geeraerts, 2010, p. 280). Then, based on the five senses of “icon” listed in the previous section, we gain insight into how a meaning derives from another meaning within “icon”.

Figure 5. Semantic Change of “Icon”



From the figure, the sense of “image” is more prototypical than others. When the original, first-appeared meaning of “an image, figure or representation” later became associated with rhetoric and writing, it led to meanings (3) and (4). As for (3), “icon” has a metaphorical meaning that refers to a rhetorical strategy when something is contrasted with another using colorful or inventive language. The word was expanded from its initial literal connotation to a figurative or metaphorical sense connected with the use of similes and imagery in rhetoric. Metonymy can work through the association between a part of an object and the whole object itself, or between one type of thing and a more specific type of thing (Denning, et al., 2023, p.179). As for (4), “icon” has come to be commonly used to describe something that accurately illustrates a particular person, object, or concept, which was attributed to metonymization. The first-appeared meaning of “icon” was also narrowed down to specifically denote an image in solid form, such as a monumental figure or a statue, and then was continuously specialized to (2) -- the realm of religion, Orthodox. “Icon” underwent a shift in meaning where it now represents not only a sacred personage in the Orthodox Church but also encompasses a broader concept of a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol, as shown in (5). The shift from (4) to (6) can be attributed to a combination of metaphorization and generalization, where “icon” no longer refers to a realistic object but rather to a representation that shares a resemblance to the subject it represents. (6) establishes a conceptual connection between signs and the subjects they represent, which implies that an “icon” can symbolize its subject in a way that carries deeper meaning. (6) gradually turned to the meaning in the field of computing during the late 20th century based on the resemblance that “icon” acts as a representation of subjects or functions it signifies. The image of an icon is superimposed on the image of a computer symbol, creating a one-shot image metaphor. Therefore, “icon” becomes the linguistic representation of the visual concept of a small, instructive symbol on the computer screen.

Conclusion

The diachronic study of “icon” has shed light on its semasiological change and transformation from its original religious connotations to its modern usage, by using data from OED, Etymonline, and COCA. Through metonymization, metaphorization, specialization, and generalization, “icon” stretches out different meanings from its original sense “image” and indicates the shift from specific to broad, religious

to digital. These broader senses of “icon” allowed for its adoption in various fields outside of religion. As the technology develops, “icon” generates the sense of “a small symbolic picture of a physical object on the computer screen”.

“Icon” has been employed in various fields, including art, religion, technology, and popular culture. In art, “icon” refers to a religious painting considered a representation of a holy figure. In religion, an icon used for veneration is a sacred image or object representing a deity, but the use of it led to significant controversies, such as the Iconoclastic Controversy in the Byzantine Empire. In some cases, “icon” is seen as a form of idolatry in religious perspectives. As for technology, with the advent of computers and graphical user interfaces, an icon is a small graphical representation of a file, program, or function on a computer desktop, as well as being widely used in user interfaces and websites to represent actions. In popular culture, an “icon” often refers to a person who is revered for their social influence, usually celebrities.

This paper concludes the five senses of “icon”, including their meaning collected from Etymonline and OED, the scope each sense applies according to COCA, and the years of their first appearance. It also zooms in on the connection among each sense analyzed by semasiology, and the proportion of each meaning in different periods based on 145 quotations in OED. The evolution of the five senses showcases how “icon” encompasses a wider range of connotations and how an ancient religious term has found new relevance and cultural significance in the realm of computers. The research conducted on the semasiological change of “icon” has provided valuable insights into its semantic and cultural journey over time, which allows us to observe the semantic shifts and expansions that have occurred over time and reveals the complex interplay of historical, religious, cultural, and technological influences that have shaped the word’s meaning and usage.

Limitations and Suggestions

The research showcases the inherent flexibility of language and its capacity to accommodate multiple meanings and contexts. “Icon” serves as a prime example of a term that has undergone semasiological change, expanding its applicability beyond its religious connotations. While the research sheds light on the evolution and broader meanings of “icon”, there are certain limitations to consider. On the one hand, the research predominantly relies on textual sources such as dictionaries and language corpora. It may not fully capture the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals regarding the evolving cultural significance of “icon”. Further qualitative research involving interviews or surveys could provide a more nuanced understanding of how people perceive and interpret the concept of an icon in different contexts. On the other hand, while the study highlights the significance of computer technology in shaping the meaning of “icon”, it does not delve extensively into the specific technological advancements or design principles that have influenced this evolution. Further exploration of the interface design and user experience aspects could provide a deeper understanding of how “icons” have become integral elements of digital interfaces. Studies would also be appreciated that attempt to find out all the words that are losing religious meaning and having their meaning adapted to contemporary life, or that finish the synchronic study of “icon”.

References

Denning, K., Kessler, B., & William, R. L. (2023). *English vocabulary elements: A course in the structure of English words, (3e)*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Davies, M. (2009). The 385+ million word corpus of contemporary American English (1990–2008+): Design, architecture, and linguistic insights. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 14(2), 159-190.
- Fabiszak, M., Hebda, A., Kokorniak, I., & Krawczak, K. (2014). The semasiological structure of Polish *myśleć* “to think”: A study in verb-prefix semantics, In D. Glynn & J. A. Robinson, (Eds.), *Corpus Methods for Semantics. Quantitative studies in polysemy and synonymy*, (pp. 223-251). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Geeraerts, D. (2010). *Theories of lexical semantics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Glynn, D. (2014). Polysemy and synonymy. Cognitive theory and corpus method, In D. Glynn & J. A. Robinson, (Eds.), *Corpus Methods for Semantics. Quantitative Studies in Polysemy and Synonymy*, (pp. 7-38). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Hilpert, M. (2016). Change in modal meanings: Another look at the shifting collocates of may. *Constructions and Frames*, 8(1), 66-85.
- Kretzschmar, W. A. (2009). *The linguistics of speech*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lindquist, H. (2009). *Corpus linguistics and the description of English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Shao, B. (2012). A Corpus-based approach to cognitive semantic analysis of English neologisms – The case of “carbon compounds”. *Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice*, (4), 21-27.
- Traugott, E. C., & Richard, B. D. (2002). *Regularity in semantic change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Justice Unveiled: Legal and Poetic Dimensions in von Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*

Can Cui, Xi Chen, Yongqiang Liu*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: cuicanender@163.com

[Abstract] Heinrich von Kleist's novella, *Michael Kohlhaas*, scrutinizes the intricate connection between legal justice and poetic justice through the captivating tale of a horse trader, Michael Kohlhaas. Kohlhaas embarks on a crusade for personal justice in the face of legal injustice, which eventually leads to his execution by guillotine. Von Kleist's masterpiece signifies the zenith of his examination of legal topics, depicting Kohlhaas as both an avenger and a rebel against an unjust legal system. The article's evaluation of the link between literary justice and legal justice demonstrates how the novella carries great weight through future generations.

While earlier studies have concentrated on literary analysis, this article examines the notion of justice regarding the division of law and justice, citing legal theory. The text explores various characters' perspectives on individual justice, analyzes the gap between poetic and legal justice, and clarifies von Kleist's complex literary structure regarding legal justice.

[Keywords] legal justice; poetic justice; revenge; literary design

Introduction

Heinrich von Kleist was a prominent figure in German Romantic literature. Known for his profound philosophical inquiries and complex character portrayals, he delved into themes of human morality and societal issues. von Kleist authored notable works such as *Michael Kohlhaas*, *Penthesilea* and *The Broken Jug*. His writings explored the intricacies of human nature, social justice, moral dilemmas, and the complexities of power dynamics.

The study of von Kleist in the Western world involves examining his life through the lenses of literary theory, psychology, anthropology, and other related fields (Breuer, 2016). Gutterman and Hamacher, starting with the life of the author von Kleist, analyzed the writing background of *Michael Kohlhaas*, suggesting that the inspiration may have stemmed from his own experiences of injustice or the political and social atmosphere of the time (Breuer, Gutterman, & Hamacher, 2013). Thum mentions that von Kleist's writing of *Michael Kohlhaas* is an important part of the discourse about the importance of attention in literature. *Michael Kohlhaas* is also an example of von Kleist's comprehensive cognitive and linguistic skepticism, which affects questions of identity and law in his work (Thums et al, 2013). Pfeiffer mentions that von Kleist wrote *Michael Kohlhaas* not with a single, straightforward intention, but rather as a complex exploration of human psychology and behavior. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, the novella can be seen as a vehicle for examining unconscious desires, conflicts, and psychological tensions within the characters, mirroring the broader themes of paradox and ambiguity found in von Kleist's oeuvre (Pfeiffer et al, 2013).

Von Kleist's translation and reception in China has followed a gradual process since the late 1920s, contrasting with the translation and reception of Goethe, Schiller and Kafka. Since the 21st century, and particularly since 2010, more attention has been given to the analysis of von Kleist's stories and plays in China (Yeh, 2010). This analysis is characterized by examination through the lens of cultural studies,

intertextual interpretations of the works of von Kleist, Kafka, and Hofmannsthal (Tolksdorf, 2020), and investigations into the modernity of von Kleist's work (Zhao, 2010, pp. 89-98).

The purpose of this article is to analyze the following aspects in the context of the law:

1. The view of individual justice in *Michael Kohlhaas* from diverse characters.
2. The dissociation between poetic justice and legal justice in *Michael Kohlhaas*
3. von Kleist's literary representation of legal justice

The *Michael Kohlhaas*' View of Justice

The Philosophical Dimension of Justice

The origin of the word "justice" is from the Greek term "Dikaion", which is closely related to legal proceedings (Bunnin & Yu, 2001, p. 530). In Roman law, "justice" was expressed as "justitia", which meant that a particular act was sanctioned by social law or custom (Kaser, 1949, pp. 22-23). Rawls, in his book *A Theory of Justice*, outlined a very elaborate theory of justice, he believed that justice is the foundation of social institutions, and the principle of justice as a basic moral principle that people choose together under conditions of complete equality. Rawls' theory of justice is based on "primordial status", which assumes that people are in a situation where they do not know their social status, wealth, talents, etc. to construct their social systems based on the principles of fairness and equality (Rawls, 1999, pp. 3-15, 47-77, 308-312).

The Role of Law-Breach Resident-Michael Kohlhaas

The origin of everything is the betrayal of justice by the law, the law as a system becomes distorted, presenting a systemic deviation between a just legislative purpose and an unjust legal practice. "Their tensions and conflicts are always present, and even at certain times or in certain epochs they can intensify instantly and present a state of extreme departure from each other" (Liu, 2014, p. 105).

The first concept of justice that supports his feelings of injustice is from the perspective of the order of commercial transactions in feudal society, which expresses his persistent pursuit of "justice" in the ideal order of civil society, and he believes that the law should protect his private property and maintain the order of the commercial society, which is his instinctive feelings as a businessman. Juncker set up private barriers to collect tolls to enrich himself; he took the liberty of stipulating that "without a permit from the sovereign no dealer could bring horses across the border" (von Kleist, 1918, p. 6) restricting passage; and illegally detaining private property and mistreating two of Kohlhaas' black horses, and Helser, the groom, who had stayed behind to look after the horses, was also badly scarred. Some basic business principles are a direct source of feelings of justice, such as fair dealing, where justice in business dealings can be understood as ensuring that transactions are conducted fairly and equitably. Justice requires that all parties in a business transaction abide by the contract, respect the terms of the transaction, and be based on equality and good faith.

In the face of the unjust new regulation, his first reaction is also to resort to the trading habits and the stable experience of business operation: "The horse dealer assured him that he had already crossed the border seventeen times in his life without such a permit, that he knew every one of the regulations of his trade" (von Kleist, 1918, p. 20). As a typical medieval merchant, his obsessive pursuit of justice in the ideal civil social order can be seen as a further emphasis on the above view of justice in commercial transactions, which further emphasizes and expands the view of justice in transactions. In an ideal civil society, the

pursuit of justice transcends harsh legal and economic considerations and is more concerned with individual freedom and equality. This may include broader social equity, fair distribution and social constraints, as well as special attention to the rights and interests of interest groups in society. In such an order, justice is the central norm of social relations and behavior to ensure that everyone is able to develop and have access to opportunities under conditions of fairness and equality.

Secondly, von Kleist reflects on the social contract theory's notion of justice through the mouth of Kohlhaas: Kohlhaas shakes his fist as he says, "Who is denied the protection of the laws! For I need this protection if my peaceful calling is to prosper; yes, it is for the protection that its laws afford me and mine that I seek shelter in the community; and whoever denies me it thrusts me out among the beasts of the wilderness. Out among the beasts of the wilderness; he is the one-how can you deny it? -who puts into my hand the club that I defend myself with ..." (von Kleist, 1918, p. 35). Kohlhaas' two steeds had sacrosanct property rights, could not perform labor and became described as withered, and ultimately could not be restored to their original state through the law. At this point the law was relied upon to maintain the community will be on Kohlhaas' obedience and trust constituted a fundamental breach of the contract, Kohlhaas had to go back to natural state, to use self-help to remedy specific natural rights. Since the state did not fulfill its obligation to grant legal protection to its citizens, Kohlhaas considered the social contract no longer binding. He resorted to his natural law to justify his war against the state, to justify his self-improvement even in the role of a monarch, and the violation of the "community of states" made Michael Kohlhaas an exile, excluded from the community, and with the most egoistic conception of the primordial justice of the individual, transformed himself from an outcast to a challenger of the existing community.

The Role of Law-Abiding Residents

Squire Huntz argued that "He observed that neither divine nor human laws justified the horse dealer in taking such terrible vengeance as he had allowed himself for this mistake" (von Kleist, 1918, p. 38). Junker found a nook and cranny in the Elector's law: "They fell back on an Electoral edict of twelve years standing that in fact forbade importing horsemen, that in fact forbade importing horse stock from Brandenburg to Saxony on account of a cattle disease: clear proof that the Junker had not only the right but even the duty to seize the horses Kohlhaas had brought across the border" (von Kleist, 1918, p. 53).

In any case, these characters repeatedly emphasized the need to "have the law in place" in an attempt to find a solution to the problem", trying to identify the golden rule for solving problems. Hoping for the authority and legitimacy of the law, without regard to whether it is just or not, and believing that the text of the law is the justice of the situation, observing and enforcing the law and acting in accordance with it.

They see the law as a system of binding rules, regardless of its consistency with justice. When Michael Kohlhaas disrupts the legal order, he faces the consequences of arrest and trial, and although in the middle he tries to challenge the legal order, when Junker receives a prison sentence, Kohlhaas complies with the sentence of the guillotine just as Socrates chose to drink the poisoned wine, and he sees the relationship between justice according to the strict legal relationship between the damage to his property corresponding to Junker's imprisonment and his own jeopardy of the state power. The two sets of relationships, the crime and the death penalty, become two separate sets of relationships because of the legal conceptual division of the crime, and even though the anger in between is intertwined, he believes that justice does not break through the existing norms, and cannot be justified because of one set of relationships in a justified purpose to reach out to everything is justified.

The Role of Mediator-Martin Luther

Martin Luther understood “justice” in terms of religious beliefs and the feudal social order: in his view, a stable feudal order, the stability of the norms of the law, is undoubtedly very important, and the destruction of the existing order is itself unjust, regardless of the existing order of right and wrong, regardless of whether the allegiance is to God or to the king of the country. “You are a rebel and no soldier of the just God, and your goal on earth is the wheel and the gallows, and in the hereafter the doom that is decreed for crime and godlessness” (von Kleist et al., 1918, p. 33). In religious beliefs, justice is often combined with sacred, moral principles. And the view of justice in feudal societies emphasized the maintenance of social order, hierarchy, and authority. This includes the feudalistic concepts of loyalty, duty, and reciprocity. These do not mean, however, that Luther would completely reject Kohlhaas’s retaliatory actions. Compensatory and retaliatory justice still exists in conceptions of justice upheld by the feudal social order and religious beliefs, and conceptions of justice in feudal societies may also involve compensating and retaliating for offenses, injustices, and targeting behaviors. He first recognizes the legitimacy of Kohlhaas’ claim: “what you are asking is only right, unless the circumstances are different from what the common report says they are” (von Kleist, 1918, p. 33), he argues that advocacy is justified, but violence is not.

Immediately after, Dr. Luther, coming from Aristotle’s neutral view of justice (Aristotle, 1976, pp. 171-188), argued that Kohlhaas should have used peaceful means and proposed the option of resting on his laurels: “But all things considered, wouldn’t you have done better to have pardoned the Junker for your Redeemers sake, taken back the pair of blacks thin and worn out as they were, and mounted and ridden to Kohlhaasenbrück to fatten them in your own stable?” (von Kleist, 1918, p. 33). Aristotle put forward the ethical concept of the mediocrity, in which “mediocrity” is given a specific connotation and mediocrity is the “middle moderation” between excess and non-excess, and moderation refers to the virtue of impartiality and adherence to the center (Aristotle, 1976, pp. 171-188). He saw justice as the realization of duties and obligations to the individual and to the community, so that each person could reach his or her highest potential in the exercise of behavior. Justice involves fair and just distribution, taking into account the balance between the needs of the individual and the interests of society as a whole. Michael Kohlhaas goes beyond the scope of Aristotle’s medieval view of justice with his use of vengeance and personal revenge in his novel. His extreme means and pursuits go beyond the framework of Aristotle’s view of justice as *meden agan*. Thus, Luther moves away from Aristotle’s concept and Michael Kohlhaas and conducts May considered without justice ideals.

The Prophecies of *Michael Kohlhaas* for Poetic Justice

Born from a Reflection on Utilitarianism

The concept of poetic justice was introduced well after the time of Kleist’s creation, but the modernity of von Kleist’s own thought makes it seem as if he described the birth of a concept of poetic justice in advance. As a literary work, it can be seen as a foreshadowing of poetic justice.

In the text, von Kleist portrays the practice of law as highly “unjust,” both in the letter and in the spirit of the law. This is an example of a process of legal alienation: “legal accidents” such as “injustice through the law” and “justice without the law” occur all the time. In this context, the questioning of whether “bad law is law or illegal” has triggered a new round of tests of the concept of justice upheld by the law. Under the background of modern legal alienation, the concept of “poetic justice” has been put forward (Jianbing Leng, 2016).

von Kleist puts the two thin horses and the war and suffering in the country as the two ends of the scale as the weights, and once they are pitted against each other to measure the magnitude of the interests, the justice supported by the “two horses” appears to be insignificant and not worth mentioning. There are many such views in the text, such as Luther’s rebuke to him: “Because the sovereign to whom you owe obedience had had a great deal to do.

Because the sovereign to whom you owe obedience had denied you your rights, rights in a quarrel over a miserable possession, you rise up, wretch, with fire and sword and, like a wolf of the desert, descend on the peaceful community he protects” (von Kleist, 1918, p. 32). In the face of countless interrogations sent in “for the sake of the two horses not to come to this”, Kohlhaas affirmed over and over again: “Kohlhaas, who cared nothing about the horses themselves - this pain would have been just as much as the pain of the horses themselves. -His pain would have been just as great if it had been a question of a pair of dogs” (von Kleist, 1918, p. 18). Throughout, Kohlhaas disagrees with the idea of taking a utilitarian measure of interest in order to evaluate everything he does. He sells his family’s property, changes his name, and is forced to become a bandit all for the sake of his initial belief “if you feel that justice must be done me if I am to continue in my trade, then don’t deny me the freedom I need to get” “...deny me the freedom I need to get it!” (von Kleist, 1918, p. 21).

If scrutinized according to a utilitarian view of justice, this compassionate sentiment of Kohlhaas is not worth mentioning, let alone protecting. Ignoring the fairness and equality dimensions of justice, utilitarianism is concerned with maximizing overall happiness; it may tolerate unjust actions as long as they are beneficial to overall happiness, and therefore tends to accept existing structures of power and authority as a means of achieving maximum happiness, failing to provide a clear framework for responding to the inequalities and abuses of power structures (Guo, 2011, pp. 51-58).

From the death of his wife to the arbitrary death sentence imposed on Kohlhaas, von Kleist completes the deconstruction of the law, and Kohlhaas’s experience demonstrates that justice has been evasive, and ultimately can only be realized in the poetic dimension through the lamentations of the heroes that von Kleist creates. In von Kleist’s work, the emotional favoritism towards Kohlhaas is obvious, portraying him as morally near perfect, a peaceful merchant, a husband who loves his wife dearly, and a rebel who would not condone burning and looting. The protagonist Kohlhaas is a contradiction between “law-abiding” and “law-breaker.” Ultimately, Kohlhaas agreed to Luther’s proposal for a dual trial and achieved his quest for justice within the national legal system, which is also known as ‘legal justice’. Furthermore, the concept of the ‘individual’s sense of justice’ was remedied only through the potent force of fairy-tale-like literary fiction, indicating that the boundaries of justice were once again represented in artistic terms.

The Opposing Propositions of Justice and Revenge

“Revenge” is a literary proposition in ancient and modern times, and revenge has been widely explored and depicted in literature as a kind of behavior reflecting injustice and seeking justice. In recent times, the avenger has faced serious legal and ethical dilemmas. On the one hand, the awakening of people’s thinking has transformed the concept of God as the center of law and ethics into a human-centered one. On the other hand, the rise of capitalism in Western society, while getting rid of the theocratic rule in the Middle Ages, has triggered the desire for power and money, and human nature has become complicated, with evil and goodness intertwined. In addition, during the period of humanism, which focuses on law and ethics, the act of revenge often leads to casualties among innocent people, destroys the legal and ethical order, and deviates

from the initial demand for justice, which makes the act of revenge face the conflict between justice and injustice in law and ethics.

Poetic Justice provides an interdisciplinary perspective that examines character behavior from an integrated legal, ethical, and literary perspective. Poetic justice argues that Kohlhaas's act of vengeance transcends simple legal and ethical justice and injustice and has the attribute of a higher level of poetic justice. The act of revenge demonstrates the qualities of courage and justice, transcending the contingency of the situation and the dilemma of revenge (Liu, 2014, pp. 49-50).

Revenge literature and "poetic justice" converge on the values of human respect and love. The act of revenge stems from the destruction of one's love and seeks the destruction of another's love, aiming at the realization of emotional equality. In the act of vengeance, there is not a renunciation of vengeance, but rather a transcendence of hatred, where the will to love life prevails over the injury of life. This transcendence is realized in respect for life, driven by human emotion (Zheng, 2013). This inner spirit of transcendence is undoubtedly a response to the spirit of "poetic justice" in literature.

Von Kleist's Literary Design on Legal Justice

Interweaving the Real and the Imaginary

In *Michael Kohlhaas*, von Kleist creates a sequence of fictional plots and details. These include an impossible prophecy and the intervention of an old gypsy fortune-teller. These fictional elements are employed to intensify the intricacy and drama of the story, and to explore the themes of justice and revenge. Through the introduction of circumstantial details and by changing the main character's name, there are also many legal references. Even the protagonist's name is changed, from Kohlhaasn to Kohlhaas and from Hans to Michael; the latter change possibly suggests a connection to Michael, the archangel of destruction. Kohlhaas is referred to twice in the story as "Würgengel (the avenging angel)".

The creative approach taken by von Kleist in *Michael Kohlhaas* involves skillfully interweaving between history and fiction. He claims to follow only sources to conceal his highly creative elements. Although the subtitle claims that the story is derived from an ancient chronicle, the reader is faced with difficulties in isolating the dividing line between history and fiction in the story's markers. This uncertainty may be disconcerting to the reader. The use of the word "aus" in the subtitle suggests that the story moves from the realm of history to the realm of fiction. The creative use of boundary-crossing plays a vital role in the story, particularly in the cross-regional movement from Brandenburg to Saxony, which emphasizes the issue of legal jurisdiction.

The Breakthrough of the "Rechtgefühl" of Justice

Von Kleist refers to "Rechtgefühl" several times in *Michael Kohlhaas*, which is a term that carries a certain mysterious quality. The term does not indicate a willingness to adhere to external laws, but rather a rigid standard within individuals that evaluates the fairness of someone's actions. Kohlhaas uses his own "Rechtgefühl" to determine whether the actions of others are fair or unfair, carefully examining them based on his own conscience. "However, his sense of justice, which was as delicate as a gold balance, still remained uncertain. He could not be certain, before his own conscience, whether the man was really guilty of a crime" (von Kleist, 1918, p. 9).

The controversy over two horses led him to renounce his citizenship and declare himself the leader of a new revolutionary regime, complete with its own rules, institutions, and governing bodies, such as rulers,

legislators, courts, and universities. Kohlhaas attempted to establish a new legal system, public tribunals, and a revolutionary world order by appealing to his innate sense of justice.

This call for justice, despite being nonviolent, includes an inherent element of violence. Kohlhaas proclaimed the establishment of a new world order. He believed his sense of justice and values surpassed the current system of law and authority. Based on his beliefs and actions, he establishes a personal moral authority that goes beyond the state and the church. Kleist depicts how an individual can challenge the existing law and authority by acting upon their sense of justice in order to establish a new system. Individual proclamations and actions of this kind may be controversial and lack widespread recognition and legitimization. Nevertheless, it also demonstrates how individuals can engage society through their resolute beliefs and actions, challenging the prevailing legal order in the pursuit of justice on a superior level (Liu, 2022, pp.142-151).

Conclusion

Heinrich von Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* is an intricate literary exploration of justice, examining themes of law, revenge, and the complex interplay between legal and poetic justice. Diverse characters, including Kohlhaas, Luther, and Martin Luther, offer a multifaceted analysis of justice. Kohlhaas' expedition, instigated by his steadfast conviction in property rights and a defective legal system, emphasizes the separation between legal justice and personal interpretations of justice, accentuating the crucial theme of the division between law and justice within the novel.

von Kleist's unparalleled design, fusing history and fiction, prompts readers to differentiate between reality and imagination. The repeated theme of "Rechtgefühl," which refers to an inherent sense of justice, highlights how individuals can be guided by their moral compass to challenge established legal norms.

The novel also forecasts the emergence of poetic justice, where the quest for justice surpasses mere utilitarian calculations, reflecting a more profound commitment to human values and emotions. The examination of revenge and its repercussions further emphasizes the complex nature of justice in a transforming society.

Essentially, Heinrich von Kleist's "Michael Kohlhaas" inspires deep contemplation on justice, encompassing both the legal system and individual moral beliefs. The novel's ongoing significance stems from its ability to provoke discourse on the boundaries of lawful and poetic justice, as well as humanity's eternal pursuit of fairness and impartiality in communal circumstances. The novel's ongoing significance stems from its ability to provoke discourse on the boundaries of lawful and poetic justice, as well as humanity's eternal pursuit of fairness and impartiality in communal circumstances.

Acknowledgement

The research is supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities in China.

References

- Aristotle. (1976). *Nicomachean ethics*, (pp. 171-188). London: Penguin Books.
- Breuer, I., Gutterman, J., & Hamacher, B. (2013). *Leben und Werk*. In Breuer, I., (Ed.) *Kleist-Handbuch*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-01309-5_1.
- Breuer, I. (2016). *Kleist-Handbuch: Leben–Werk–Wirkung*. Stuttgart, Germany: J.B. Metzler.
- Bunnin, N., & Yu, J. (Eds.) (2001). *Dictionary of western philosophy: English-Chinese*. Beijing: People's Publishing House.

- Guo, X. (2011). "Most people" and "least beneficiaries" - The ethical foundations of two views of justice and their ambiguity. *Academic Monthly*, 43(10), 51-58.
- Kaser, M. (1949). *Das Altromischelus*. Göttingen, (pp. 22-23).
- Leng, J. (2016). *Toward poetic justice of law*. East China University of Politics and Law.
- Liu, Q. (2022). Out of the labyrinth of "evil laws are also laws" - An analysis of paradoxes in Hart's *Philosophy of Law*. *Academia*, (03), 142-151.
- Liu, X. (2014). *Research on law and literature - Based on relational perspective*, (pp. 49-50, 105). Social Science Literature Press.
- Pfeiffer, J. et al. (2013). Forschungsansätze. In Breuer, I., (Ed.) *Kleist-Handbuch*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-01309-5_6.
- Rawls, J. (1999). *A theory of justice* (Revised edition), (pp. 3-15, 47-77, 308-312). Harvard University Press.
- Thums, B. et al. (2013). Konzeptionen: Denkfiguren, Begriffe, Motive. In Breuer, I. (Ed.), *Kleist-Handbuch*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler.
- Von Kleist, H. (1918). *Michael Kohlhaas*. M. Greenberg, (Trans.). Melville House Books.
- Yeh, J. (2010). Kleist studies in modern China. *Journal of the College of Literature, Nanjing Normal University*, (01), 94-98.
- Zhao, L. (2010). On the modernity of Kleist's Chinese novels. *Journal of Tongji University (Social Science Edition)*, (02), 89-98.
- Zheng, S. (2013). *Justice of poetic and poetic justice - Collision and conspiracy between literature and jurisprudence*. Zhejiang University.

A Study of the Dual-Layered Narrative Structure in Atsushi Nakajima's *The Moon Over the Mountain*

Rungaoyuan Dong, Lita A^{*1}

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: drgytjke1711142@gmail.com

[Abstract] Atsushi Nakajima's renowned work, *The Moon Over the Mountain*, exhibits a dual-layered narrative structure. The intradiegetic narrator is Li Zheng, whose narration occupies a significant portion of the text and displays a strong but unreliable self-awareness. The intradiegetic narrator's narration presents two perspectives, the "human" and the "tiger", using different personal pronouns. Through the shift in different perspectives, the intradiegetic narrator is able to engage in self-reflection and self-scrutiny. The extradiegetic narrator is an omniscient narrator who, despite having knowledge of the entire story, strategically refuses to narrate the complete story. This paper focuses on the content within the parentheses added by the extradiegetic narrator, highlighting that the parentheses not only supplement the characters' actions but also serve as a form of criticism and commentary. Furthermore, this paper analyzes the narrative characteristics of the extradiegetic narrator, pointing out that the scope of their narration is actually narrower than what they know. By analyzing the implied meanings in their expressions, new interpretations of the text can be made.

[Keywords] narratology; *The Moon Over the Mountain*; extradiegetic narrator; intradiegetic narrator

Introduction

The Moon Over the Mountain was published in the literary magazine *Bungakukai* in February 1942. It tells the story of Li Zheng, a talented scholar who turned away from the world due to his arrogant nature. He transformed into a tiger and vanished one day. On day he reunited with his old friend Yuan Can and confessed his "timid pride" and "disdainful shyness" (McCarthy, 2011, p. 5) as the reason for turning into a tiger. The novel is highly regarded for its unique style and the theme of man's inward tragedy, and it has been included in Japanese senior high school textbooks for over eighty years.

Until now, research on *The Moon Over the Mountain* has mainly focused on comparative literature and auteur theory. Kazuo (1960) Yamashiki compared *The Moon Over the Mountain* with its model, *The Man who turned into a Tiger*, pointing out that the former exhibits notable characteristics of complex characterizations and simplified storylines. Furthermore, in terms of themes, the latter emphasizes the Buddhist concept of karma while the former is rich in reflection and scrutiny of human nature, making it an authentic modern novel. Regarding the relationship between the work and its author, Bingkun Chen (1995) identifies "timid pride" and "doubt about human nature" as distinctive features of Atsushi Nakajima's works, which are also evident in his autobiographical novel *Wolf's Illness*. There are also studies such as the relationship with Japan under the war and the self-consciousness in the text, etc. None of this research has departed from the frameworks of auteur theory.

With Roland Barthes declaring "the death of the author", the focus of the research on *The Moon Over the Mountain* has gradually shifted from the study of the author and the environment outside the text to the text itself, and narratology is one of the emerging disciplines. *The Moon Over the Mountain*, with its unique dual-layered narrative structure, has gained significant attention in narratological studies. Under the

¹ Corresponding author. E-mail address: arita@zju.edu.cn

perspective of narratology, the single understanding of “author=Li Zheng” began to be challenged, and the characters hidden in the text gradually surfaced, which also made it possible to make new interpretations without being limited to the social environment at that time. Based on the discussion of the prior research, this paper will primarily address the following three issues:

1. The narrative structure of *The Moon Over the Mountain*
2. The narrative characteristics of the intradiegetic narrator (Li Zheng)
3. The narrative attitude and characteristics of the extradiegetic narrator

Literature Review

So far, the narrative research on *The Moon Over the Mountain* has mostly been conducted by Japanese scholars. One of the earliest systematic studies of its narrative structure is Minoru Tanaka (1994)'s article “The Scream of the Self-Imposed Loneliness: *Sangetsuki*”². He identifies two narrators in the story: an extradiegetic narrator and an intradiegetic narrator which is known as Li Zheng's voice. The first shift between the two occurs when “the voice in the grass begins narrating”. They then alternate with each other, forming the basic narrative structure of *The Moon Over the Mountain*. Tanaka's argument has been widely accepted by most scholars, and subsequent narrative studies of *The Moon Over the Mountain* have also been carried out under his dual-layered narrative structure.

While agreeing with Tanaka's argument, Chitose Koyama (2010) offered a new insight into the relationship between the two narrators. According to Koyama, the extradiegetic narrator is always self-conscious, and that the extradiegetic narrator maintains a certain distance from Li Zheng's narration. He also draws attention to the distinction in the usage of “old friend (kojin in Japanese)” and “friend (tomo in Japanese)” as well as “myself (jibun in Japanese)” and “I (ore in Japanese)” in the text, indicating that Li Zheng does not realize that the narrative is complemented by the extradiegetic narrator. On the other hand, Takako Atsumi (1996) took a more moderate stance, suggesting that although the extradiegetic narrator recedes in Li Zheng's narration, there are still parts where they interject and express their own viewpoints. She also notes that after the encounter with Yuan Can, the extradiegetic narrator shifts the perspective onto Yuan Can, becoming a narratee of Li Zheng. Kuniaki Mitani (1996) directly applied narratology theory and argues that *The Moon Over the Mountain* employs “free indirect speech”, allowing the narrator to naturally narrate the story through Yuan Can as a medium.

Currently, there have been many discussions regarding the position of the intradiegetic narrator in *The Moon Over the Mountain* and the relationship between the two narrators in the text. However, research on the extradiegetic narrator is still in its early stages. In my perspective, in terms of narrative behavior, the extradiegetic narrator aims to allow the story to unfold naturally while cloaking their own presence in the characters. They also reveal their existence within the text, resulting in a dynamic narrative behavior. When it comes to narrative attitude, the extradiegetic narrator assumes an interventionist, providing explanations or commentary on the story. This point will be further discussed in subsequent sections. Additionally, there is not enough research on what the narrator tells in such framework. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine the “content” of the narration after its “form” has been clarified. With this consideration in mind, this paper

² The Romanized Japanese pronunciation of *The Moon Over the Mountain* is “Sangetsuki”. Therefore, Japanese scholars often use “Sangetsuki” as the English translation on *The Moon Over the Mountain*. Due to the original title, no modifications are made here by the author.

will elaborate the narrative structure of *The Moon Over the Mountain* while also revisiting the content of the narration and attempting to provide a new interpretation of the text.

The Narrative Characteristics of Li Zheng's Monologue

The Deception of Narrator

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, narrators are categorized as either a reliable narrator or an unreliable one. The reliability of a narrator is determined by the presence of both factual information and the narrator's values (Booth, 1983). However, in *The Moon Over the Mountain*, facts and values are intertwined and the truthfulness of the narration is influenced by their values, thus, firstly, it is necessary to examine the reliability of the intradiegetic narrator. When recounting his experience of transforming into a tiger, the intradiegetic narrator, Li Zheng, narrates:

At that moment, a rabbit ran before me, and in an instant the human within me disappeared. When it reappeared, I awoke to find my mouth smeared with blood and rabbit fur scattered around me.....Yet for a few hours each day, my human consciousness returns; and then as in former days, I can use human speech and think complex thoughts, and even recite passages from the Confucian classics (McCarthy, 2011, p. 4).

Here, the narrator describes his two states of being, as both a "tiger" and a "human". In his tiger state, he lacks humanity, while in his human state, he is capable of complex thinking and could never commit crimes or attack humans. At the end of his narration, he advises Yuan Can not to take the same path when returning, lest he lose consciousness and hurt his friends by mistake. Throughout the intradiegetic narration, the narrator's logic is consistent, even demonstrating concern for his friend. However, when we shift our focus to the narration of the extradiegetic narrator, we become aware of the deception involved.

By what little remained of the moonlight, they made their way through a grassy area of a forest, when suddenly out from a thicket leapt a tiger. The tiger appeared ready to attack Yuan Can when it abruptly turned around and retreated. A human voice could now be heard from the thicket... (McCarthy, 2011, p. 2).

Under the narration of the extradiegetic narrator, Li Zheng's narration is self-defeating. That is to say, according to Li Zheng's narration, it is impossible for him to attack Yuan Can without consciousness and then emit a "human voice" after the failed attack, as he claims to have lost his humanity and consciousness during the attack. It is evident that Li Zheng has been conscious all along, and his so-called "loss of consciousness" is nothing more than a cover-up for his "timid pride" and "disdainful shyness". Although the extradiegetic narrator does not explicitly reveal Li Zheng's deception, they imply the contradiction in Li Zheng's narration through their omniscient narration.

However, Li Zheng's deception in this instance is not easily noticeable. Firstly, the extradiegetic narrator starts with a plain and rapid overview of Li Zheng's youth at the beginning of the story. It is not until the sentence "they made their way by the faint light of the waning moon" that the narration shifts to a slower pace. This makes it more difficult for readers to notice the contradiction between Li Zheng's words. Additionally, as pointed out by Atusmi (1996), the narrator adopts Yuan Can's perspective after their encounter, serving as a narratee of the intradiegetic narration. Yuan Can, upon hearing Li Zheng's account, "laments the poet's misfortunes", clearly unaware of Li Zheng's deception. The narratee serves as an important intermediary between the narrator and the reader, and the narratee's attitude towards the narrated character often evokes the reader's empathy (Hu, 2004). In this case, readers could be deceived by Yuan

Can's attitude and fail to recognize the deception of the intradiegetic narrator. The extradiegetic narrator on one hand, implies Li Zheng's deception, maintaining a distance from the characters, and on the other hand, does not explicitly state it, maintaining a certain distance from the readers. This indicates that the extradiegetic narrator is an independent narrator with unique position in the text.

Transformation of the Perspectives of "Human" and "Tiger" in Li Zheng's Narration

According to Koyama (2010, p. 9), Li Zheng's narration involves the use of two different first-person pronouns, "jibun" and "ore"³, which are explained as the different appellations used when the "human side" or the "beast side" dominates. Indeed, semantically speaking, "ore" is rougher and more suitable to describe one's beastly nature. However, this explanation does not adequately account for why Li Zheng uses "jibun" when reciting his poetry but suddenly switches to "ore" to refer to himself before writing poems on the spot. In both instances, there is no manifestation of Li Zheng's beastly nature. Furthermore, his poetry does not reflect his beastly side but rather presents a more lucid self-description. Therefore, in my opinion, the variation in Li Zheng's use of pronouns does not stem from a struggle between his human and beastly nature but rather represents the narrator's self-description from two different perspectives: the "human" and the "tiger". When the narrator uses the "jibun", the content of his narration is mostly descriptive, such as his own ambition when he was young and his experience of becoming a tiger from a human being, etc. In this perspective, the narrator considers that becoming a tiger is incredible and has no doubt about his own talent; whereas, when the narrator uses the "ore", the narrative content shifts to self-reflection and introspection. It is not difficult to notice that there is a significant difference between the two perspectives. As a "human", the narrator lacks the ability to reflect himself and even lies to preserve his "timid self-esteem".

The contradictions in the narrator's monologue are also closely related to the shift in perspective. For example, the narrator at first attributes the reason for his transformation into a tiger to "our fate as creatures", but later says, "when I think carefully about it, I have in fact some idea why", disproving his prior fatalism. Tanaka explains this contradiction as "the awakening of Li Zheng's self-consciousness" (McCarthy, 2011, p. 56). In my opinion, "the awakening of the self" simultaneously comes with a change of perspective. As a "human", the narrator is not aware of his own defects, and may consciously or unconsciously deceive himself and others. Only when he examines himself from the perspective of the "tiger" is he able to engage in deep thinking and find out the reasons for his failure. It should be noted, however, that the intradiegetic narrator does not possess the ability to freely shift perspectives. In the latter part of the narrative, the intradiegetic narrator frequently changes the pronouns, demonstrating doubt about his own existence. By examining the narrative content in terms of perspective shifts, one can better understand the essence of Li Zheng's tragic life.

The Narrative Features of Extradiegetic Narrator: Focusing on Parentheses

In *The Moon Over the Mountain*, the extradiegetic narrator exists outside the story and, although unable to directly intervene, cleverly demonstrates their independence through shifts in perspective. Tomoaki Ninohira (2012) pointed out that the extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrators alternate their narratives through different paragraphs, although there are exceptions such as the use of parentheses. In previous studies, parentheses are often seen as supplementary explanations to the narration. However, if we examine

³ According to Cambridge Dictionary, "jibun (自分)" is explained as "one's own", while "ore (おれ)" is explained as "'I' or 'me' used by men." Additionally, it is noted that the usage of "ore" is more informal and colloquial. Both can be used as first-person pronouns.

the relationship between the sentences inside and outside, it is not difficult to find that the parentheses indicate different levels of narration between the inside and outside. They should not be simply regarded as supplementary explanations. The following discussion will give a detailed account of the subject and content of each of the three parentheses.

Interpretation of the “A Subtle Lack”

After listening to Li Zheng’s recitation of poems, the extradiegetic narrator describes Yuan Can’s reaction as follows:

He recited thirty long and short poems, elegant in expression and lofty in sentiment, all demonstrating, even upon the first hearing, the poet’s uncommon ability. Yet Yuan Can, although deeply impressed, could not overcome a vague unease: There could be no question that the poet’s talents were first-rate, but there seemed to be something missing that kept the poems from achieving the highest quality (a subtle lack). (McCarthy, 2011, p. 5)

Since the publication of *The Moon Over the Mountain*, scholars have extensively discussed what exactly Li Zheng’s poetry lacks, resulting in numerous theories. In “Investigating the ‘A Subtle Lack’: A Study on Atsushi Nakajima’s *The Moon Over the Mountain*”, Hisao Yoshimura summarizes eight different viewpoints and provides criticism and analysis for each. It is worth noting that the most widely accepted and influential viewpoint is the “lack of humanity”, which has even become the standard explanation in Japanese senior high school language textbooks. However, these studies merely interpret the “subtle lack” as a supplementary explanation of Yuan Can’s feelings. Yet, if we carefully analyze the semantics inside and outside the parentheses, it is noticeable that Yuan Can’s feeling of “something missing” is a general statement, while “a subtle lack” is a specific one. If both are the thoughts of Yuan Can, the narrator could have said “Yuan Can felt that there was a subtle lack in Li Zheng’s work” without the need for parentheses. Thus, it could be stated that the content within the parentheses is the extradiegetic narrator’s evaluation of Li Zheng’s poetry.

What exactly does this “subtle lack” refer to? As mentioned earlier, the intradiegetic narrator presents both the “human” and “tiger” perspectives, with their narratives interweaving with the extradiegetic narrator’s. As to the plot of “Li Zheng composing poetry”, the narrative structure is:

Li Zheng recited his own previously written poems (intradiegetic narrator’s narration) → Yuan Can felt “something missing” (extradiegetic narrator’s narration) → A subtle lack (extradiegetic narrator’s addition) → Li Zheng’s changed his perspective from “human” to “tiger”, beginning self-deprecation (intradiegetic narrator’s narration) → Li Zheng improvised poetry on the spot (intradiegetic narrator’s narration) - Yuan Can lamented the poet’s misfortune (extradiegetic narrator’s narration).

In this narrative thread, it is clear that Yuan Can perceived Li Zheng’s old works as “lacking”, while his response to Li Zheng’s new works is a lament for the poet’s misfortunes. The contrast in the extradiegetic narrator’s attitude is also evident: regarding Li Zheng’s old works, the narrator not only failed to acknowledge them but even supplemented Yuan Can’s feelings by pointing out the lack in Li Zheng’s work as “a subtle lack”. However, with Li Zheng’s new work, the extradiegetic narrator silently accepted Yuan Can’s perception of the poet’s misfortune, reflecting a certain degree of approval. From the change in the narrator’s attitude, it can be concluded that Li Zheng’s old work and his new work are quite different, and that the new work is better than the first thirty poems, which is the so-called “a certain subtle point”.

Although Li Zheng's previous works are not mentioned in the text, it is noticeable that prior to composing the impromptu poem, he underwent a shift in self-identification from "jibun" to "ore". In my opinion, the change of perspective here is of great significance in explaining the meaning of "subtle lack". As a "human", he lacks the ability to reflect on his own failures and attributes everything to "our fate as creatures". It is not difficult to imagine that his nature would naturally be reflected in his poetry. On the other hand, when composing the poetry on the spot, his madness and sharpness were stripped away, and the poem "unable to sing an ode, I can only howl" reflected his regret and reflection on his past actions. After the improvisation of poetry, Li Zheng delved into deeper contemplation, claiming that his misfortune is due to his "timid pride" and "disdainful shyness". These aspects, which were imperceptible to Li Zheng when viewing things from a human perspective, constitute the "lack" in his previous works.

Additionally, it should also be noted that the extradiegetic narrator is much more clear-headed than Yuan Can. Yuan Can, as an intellectual, may only rely on his feelings towards poetry to realize that there is a "lack" in Li Zheng's poetry in certain places. The extradiegetic narrator, on the other hand, replaced Yuan Can's general feeling with a more specific expression, constituting a criticism of Yuan. As mentioned earlier, the extradiegetic narrator initially adopts Yuan's perspective after their encounter but does not completely vanish. Instead, at times, they detach from Yuan and the narrator for an omniscient viewpoint. The presence of parentheses serves as evidence of the narrator's independence.

Analysis of Li Zheng's Self-Deprecation

Laugh at me. Laugh at this pitiful creature who couldn't become a poet but turned into a tiger (Yuan Can recalled the youthful Li Zheng's penchant for self-mockery, and listened with a heavy heart.) By the way, shall I add to the fun by composing an extemporaneous expressing my present feelings? (McCarthy, 2011, p. 7).

In this passage, the narration inside and outside the parentheses represents the narratives of the intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrator, respectively. The presence of parentheses undoubtedly indicates that the extradiegetic narrator consciously enters the story and interrupts the narrative of the intradiegetic narrator. In *The Moon Over the Mountain*, the intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrators usually unfold their narratives in separate paragraphs. However, here the extradiegetic narrator broke this rule and provided the information that young Li Zheng also had a habit of self-deprecation.

Regarding "self-deprecating tendency", Tanaka (1994) pointed out that Li Zheng's self-deprecation is not a self-analysis but an inability to face his true self. It is also noted that Li Zheng's self-deprecating tendency stems from "intense arrogance and a desire for self-expression" (Kawashima, 2012). Psychological research also suggests that self-deprecation is a self-protective mechanism. That is, a person can stop worrying about being mocked once they start by mocking themselves (Janes & Olson, 2010). This is why Li Zheng, a pompous and haughty individual, often mocks himself. However, Yuan Can responded to Li Zheng's "self-deprecating tone" with a deeply sorrowful mood, indicating that he was emotionally driven and unable to grasp the true motive behind Li Zheng's self-deprecation. He failed to comprehend the genuine reason behind Li Zheng's self-deprecation, leading the extradiegetic narrator's narration to also serve as a critique of Yuan Can.

The above is an account of Li Zheng's "self-deprecation" from Yuan Can's point of view. It should be noted that since the narrator observes the story almost from Yuan's point of view, all the "self-deprecation" in the text is Yuan's judgment. However, if we switch to Li Zheng's perspective and reexamine the text, it is evident that "laugh at this pitiful creature who couldn't become a poet but turned into a tiger" is nothing

but a fact in Li Zheng's inner world. When he viewed himself as a "tiger", he saw his own downfall and pitiful state, which does not constitute any kind of self-deprecation. The phrase "self-deprecation" also appears at the end of his narration:

Yuan Can was in tears as he assured his old friend that he would do what was asked. But Li Zheng's voice suddenly resumed a tone of self-mockery: "Were I human at least, I would have begged this favor before anything else. A man who is more concerned about his wretched poetry than about his wife and children deserves the fate of becoming a beast!" (McCarthy, 2011, p. 7).

Here, the intradiegetic narrator clearly narrated from the perspective of the "tiger" (using the pronoun "ore"), reflecting on how his own obsession with poetry led to his transformation into a beast. It is an expression of Li Zheng's genuine feelings and does not involve any self-deprecation. The perception of "self-deprecation" is solely Yuan Can's impression, as he just cannot understand that Li Zheng is narrating from the perspective of the "tiger". Therefore, he interpreted the phrase "were I human" as a kind of self-deprecation. As the extradiegetic narrator has not departed from Yuan Can's perspective, the narrator naturally become an accomplice to Yuan Can. This demonstrates that the extradiegetic narrator could be distant from the reader and closer to the characters.

The Narrative Structure of "Return to the Tiger State"

"And now we must say farewell, since the time of getting drunk (return to the tiger state) is near, "said Li Zheng's voice. (McCarthy, 2011, p. 6)

The narrative structure of this sentence is quite strange. Firstly, the phrase "Li Zheng's voice said" and the pronoun "I" make it clear that this is a direct quotation from Li Zheng. However, "return to the tiger state" cannot be Li Zheng's words. If this were a supplementary explanation to the previous text, Li Zheng should have used phrases like "that is, returning to the tiger" or "no, it should be returning to the tiger". Additionally, just as narrated by Li Zheng previously, he consistently views the phenomenon of "human→tiger" as "getting drunk", and this sentence is his narration from the perspective of the "human". Therefore, "return to the tiger state" is an insertion by the extradiegetic narrator as well as a correction of the intradiegetic narrator's statement. Here, the difference in attitude between the intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrators is evident. The intradiegetic narrator considered "human→tiger" as "getting drunk", which is an abnormal state, while the extradiegetic narrator uses the verb "return" and argues that Li Zheng is originally a tiger, and turning into a tiger is merely returning to his true self. The extradiegetic narrator exhibits a strong self-awareness, inserting the "correction" into the direct quotation, reflecting their strong sense of criticism towards the intradiegetic narrator.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the extradiegetic narrator consistently views Li Zheng as a "loser". At the beginning of the text, they outline Li Zheng's life before turning into a tiger, using words such as "arrogant". In the middle of the text, although they temporarily shift the perspective to Yuan Can, they still maintain an independent position. When Li Zheng attempts to argue that his transformation into a tiger is merely "getting drunk", the extradiegetic narrator cannot remain silent and corrects Li Zheng's narration. At the same time, there is a shift in the narrative length between the intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrators: before the appearance of the third parentheses, the intradiegetic narrator's narration occupies the majority, but from the extradiegetic narrator's refutation onwards, the narrative length of both becomes balanced. The extradiegetic narrator actually has the ability to control the narrative of the entire story, while consciously limits their perspective in the middle of the story.

Analysis of the Extradiegetic Narrator's Image

Based on the previous discussion, the extradiegetic narrator's image could be concluded as followings: Firstly, the extradiegetic narrator is omniscient. They know everything that happened, and their narration only represents a part of the many events they choose to narrate. They can overlook the entire story, as seen in the beginning of the text, and they can also inhabit the perspective of a character, narrating only what the character sees and hears while omitting their psychological activities. However, if they wish, they can easily enter the character's inner world. They know more than the narratee and the readers.

Secondly, the extradiegetic narrator possesses self-awareness. In most cases, when the intradiegetic narrator begins their narration, the extradiegetic narrator remains silent. However, if the intradiegetic narrator's narration significantly deviates from their own understanding, the extradiegetic narrator intervenes and may even interrupt the intradiegetic narrator's monologue. This highlights the extradiegetic narrator's authority over the overall narrative, granting them greater power than the intradiegetic narrator. The extradiegetic narrator's consciousness is also evident in their deliberate detachment from both the characters and the readers. They possess greater intelligence than characters and could not be deceived by the intradiegetic narrator. Nevertheless, they are unwilling to disclose the entire story and refrain from utilizing omniscient narration, maintaining a certain distance from the readers. Under their control, the readers are unable to perceive the complete picture of the story.

Lastly, and of utmost significance, the extradiegetic narrator's reliability. While they may withhold certain knowledge, their narration is trustworthy. Even when they maintain a certain distance from the readers, they merely convey Yuan Can's reactions and recount them faithfully (despite the potential for reader misinterpretation). However, unlike the intradiegetic narrator, they do not invent nonexistent elements or engage in falsehoods. It is precisely due to the extradiegetic narrator's reliability that analyzing the implied meaning in their narration becomes meaningful. If we consider what the narrator knows as the entire story, the cognitive scope of each character, in the text can be summarized as follows:

Intradiegetic narrator's narration < What Yuan Can sees < Extradiegetic narrator's narration = What the reader sees < What the extradiegetic narrator knows = Entire story.

Conclusion

Narratology, as a burgeoning field, has only been applied to the study of *The Moon Over the Mountain* for two decades. By employing narratology, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the implied meaning behind the characters and develop fresh interpretations of the text. The main achievement of this paper is to reveal the presence of an extradiegetic narrator in *The Moon Over the Mountain*. Through an analysis of their narrative discourse, this narrator is found to be an omniscient, self-aware, and reliable entity. Within the dual narrative structure of the novel, the extradiegetic narrator supplements, elucidates, and rectifies the intradiegetic narrator's account using parentheses, possessing a greater depth of knowledge than both the intradiegetic narrator and the narratee.

Building upon this conclusion, further analysis of the information known to the extradiegetic narrator can be employed to interpret the text. Moreover, similar narrative structures can be identified in other works by Atsushi Nakajima, which have received limited scholarly attention thus far. As a promising direction for future research, it would be worthwhile to explore the use of the first-person reflexive pronoun "oneself" (Japanese: "onore") in *The Moon Over the Mountain*, the extradiegetic narrator's self-awareness beyond the parentheses, and the utilization of parentheses in other works by Atsushi Nakajima.

References

- Bingkun, C. (1995). Chinese classical literature and Japanese literature. [Doctoral dissertation. Hiroshima University]. NDL Digital Collections.
- Booth, W. (1983). *The rhetoric of fiction*. University of Chicago Press, the Second Edition.
- Chitose, K. (2010). To make students open their hearts to others: Focusing on the role of Yuancan in Sangetsu-ki. *Japanese Literature*, 59(3), 2-19.
- Hisao, Y. (2002). Investigating the 'A subtle lack': A study on Atushi Nakajima's *The Moon Over the Mountain*. *Journal of Modern Literature*, 13, 35-46.
- Janes, L. M., & Olson, J. M. (2010). Is it you or is it me? Contrasting effects of ridicule targeting other people versus the self. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 6(3), 46-70.
- Kazue, K. (2012). I want to tell you that there is what can never be told: Reading Sangetsu-ki in Class. *Japanese Literature*, 61(3), 2-13.
- Kazuo, Y. (1960). The moon over the mountain and the man who turned into a tiger. *The Journal of Sinology*, 8, 13-18.
- Kuniaki, M. (1996). "Narrative Structure of Atsushi Nakajima's Sangetsuki: A Linguistic Analysis (Reading)", *Japanese Literature*, 45 (7), 68-70.
- Minoru, Tanaka (1994). The scream of the self-imposed loneliness: Sangetsuki. *Japanese Literature*, 43(5), 48-59.
- McCarthy, P. (2011). *The moon over the mountain and other stories*. Chicago: Autumn Hill Books.
- Takako, A. (1996). *New textbook theory. New works theory*. Ubumi Press.
- Tomoaki, N. (2012). The value of narrative behavior in teaching materials: Interpreting the narrator's possibilities in the moon over the mountain. *Research in Humanities and Social Sciences Education*, 39, 1-12.
- Yamin, H. (2004). *Narratology*. Huazhong Normal University Press.

A Study of the Idea of “Existence” in Brodsky’s Main Essays

Lintian Feng, Lei Jiang*

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3200100077@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] Joseph Brodsky’s main essay collections – “Less Than One”, “Watermark”, “On Grief and Reason” – contain many elements of existentialist philosophy, but all these statements are literary and do not have a systematic “existentialist ideology”. In his essays, existence is treated as nothingness and absurdity, which instills fear, and the only way out of this existential dilemma is through language and literature. From an evolutionary point of view, the expression of “existence” in his essays changed from extreme to moderate, and finally nothingness was sanctified, ceasing to evoke a sense of absurdity and fear. This process of evolution was closely related to different stages of his life, changes in his emotional life and the influence of other people’s thoughts.

[Keywords] Joseph Brodsky; essays; the idea of existence; Less Than One

Introduction

There are three main collections of essays written by Joseph Brodsky: “Less Than One”, “Watermark”, and “On Grief and Reason”. The texts related to “existence” in these three are all basically descriptive, but they still reflect his thoughts on “existence”. There is an opinion that Brodsky’s creations are connected with existentialist ideas. Valentina Polukhina found a holistic model of the connection between his poetic tradition and existentialism in “Brodsky Through the Eyes of His Contemporaries” (1992), and her article “Metaphorical Grammar and Artistic Meaning” (1986) also reveals Brodsky’s connection with existentialist philosophical thought. Yet most of these ideas are addressed to Brodsky’s poetic creations. “Brodsky’s essay ... has developed into a kind of ‘being’ with its own distinctive style and self-existent meaning” (Liu, 2014, p. 3).

We can explain and analyze the dynamic change of thoughts based on this clear and explicit textual clue, and mutually corroborate with the poetic creation for a more in-depth study of his thoughts. This study is divided into four parts: an overview of the idea of “existence” in Brodsky’s essays, an elaboration of each, an elaboration of the process of evolution and the reasons for it, and a conclusion.

The Expressions of “Existence”: “Secondary Effects” in the Process of Achieving Literary Purpose

In Brodsky’s essays, numerous elements of existentialist philosophy are presented, but they were not formed into a systematic whole. On the one hand, existentialism had a profound influence on his thought. The influence of the works of Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Shestov, and others shaped his thinking. “Brodsky absorbed existentialist aesthetics” (Loseff, 2006, p. 164). On the other hand, Brodsky strongly rejected all systematic philosophy, “he does not espouse any consistent ideology or worldview” (Loseff, 2006, p. 163). In an interview with Solomon Volkov, he explained the reason: “An existential echo has to arise..... I’ve always aimed to make myself scarce to avoid becoming a victim of inertia” (Brodsky & Volkov, 1998, p. 28). The “existentialist philosophical implications” of the text are a “secondary effect” in the process of achieving his literary purpose. He “borrowed” them in order to write in a more precise way.

* Corresponding author. Email address: jianglei019@163.com

The Full View of the “Existential Dilemma”: Interpretation and Exit

The Nothingness and Absurdity of Existence: From Hometown to Mankind

The view of existentialist philosophy is that the purposelessness of the world means the meaningless of human activities, which leads to the meaningless of individual existence. The contradiction between the meaninglessness of existence and people’s need for meaning is irreconcilable. Meaningless existence is nothingness. “The ‘nothing’ with which anxiety brings us face to face, unveils the nullity by which Dasein, in its very basis, is defined; and this basis itself is as thrownness into death” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 356). Existence is accidental, unexplained, meaningless, and therefore absurd. In Brodsky’s essays, the nothingness and absurdity of existence are everywhere.

In Brodsky’s narrative of youth, “existence” already had the meaning of nothingness. There is a view that the formation of Brodsky’s poetics and aesthetics is inseparable from the two periods of childhood and exile (Mao, 2018). The sense of nothingness originated from the large environment (country, society) and the small environment (city, factory) under the Soviet regime, all of which were meaninglessly repeated at the same time, arousing his sense of absurdity. A sense of absurdity invaded his childhood, which caused him to even deny the existence of childhood. “In a sense, there never was such a thing as childhood. These categories - childhood, adulthood, maturity - seem to me very odd, and if I use them occasionally in conversation, I always regard them mutely, for myself, as borrowed” (Brodsky, 1986, p. 16). Brodsky believed that the unreality of childhood was caused by the fluidity of life itself. This fluidity was the result of a combination of existential nothingness and absurdity. The nothingness without an exit had caused self-disgust. Brodsky spoke forthrightly about his sense of self-disgust as a child: “For one thing, that childhood wasn’t all that happy (a childhood seldom is, being, rather, a school of self-disgust and insecurity)” (Brodsky, 1992, p. 6). The concept “less than one” originated exactly from here. The specific meaning of this concept is that my entity, which does not actually change over time, is hidden in a body that is constantly changing physical appearance under the influence of the environment and the natural laws, observing all existence outside. The environment cannot affect my entity, which is “less than one”. Regardless of the position of the body, the authentic self is not affected. “To get a low grade, to operate a milling machine, to be beaten up at an interrogation, or to lecture on Callimachus in a classroom is essentially the same” (Brodsky, 1986, p. 17).

In his further life in exile, Brodsky’s two attempts to escape from nothingness and absurdity failed, yet this attempt became a kind of reinforcement. For an exiled writer, the greatest nothingness is insignificance. As exile life began, governmental “stimulation” of the individual gradually weakened: “...there exists a suspicion of a pendulum-like dependency, or ratio, between those irritants and his mother tongue” (Brodsky, 1996, p. 30). Finding meaning in existence through the affirmation of self-worth by others is itself a falsification of the meaning of existence. The objectivity of this dependence and the subjectivity of others’ evaluations made Brodsky realize that proving the writer’s identity and the fruits of his work was not a feasible way out of the existential dilemma. The life experience of the American poet Wystan Auden, whom he admired, supported this realization. “In the dining hall the members of the faculty jostled him away from the food board ... This sort of thing alienates one not only from faculty members but also from one’s fellows in the field ...” (Brodsky, 1986, pp. 379-380). There was a merciless contrast between the manner in which society welcomed a politician and its indifference to a poet, and the sense of absurdity became even more acute in such a contrast. Travel was also denied. As travel became more frequent, Brodsky gradually realized the deceptive and meaningless essence of this endeavor: “...regardless of what

it says on your ticket ... you'll see at once Notre-Dame, St. James, San Giorgio, and Hagia Sophia” (Brodsky, 1996, p. 39). People escape the dilemma of existence by viewing the extraneous objects. It is not a passable exit, but a cover. “What it boils down to is that I didn’t see the place” (Brodsky, 1996, p. 77). “Primary absurdity manifests itself as a schism - the schism between ...between man’s drive to attain the eternal and the finite nature of his existence...” (Sartre, 2007, p. 74).

In the end, the nothingness of existence was lifted to a historical level, and the subject of resistance to nothingness was also shifted from the individual to the whole. Throughout the history of mankind, nothingness remains and will remain stable from beginning to end, because the end of history is as inevitable as the death of the individual. The description in “Watermark” is the initial revelation. Fragments of cloth scattered on the floor, touching them is excessively intimate, as is history. “This was neither decay nor decomposition; this was dissipation back into time ...” (Brodsky, 1992, p. 54) Several years later, this perspective was fully expressed. Whether human interest in historical studies is driven by ethics or the desire for a “common denominator”, they are all, without exception, based on eschatology. The natural sense of the nothingness of existence is no weaker in historians than in poets. “...the notion of nonbeing gets doubled” (Brodsky, 1996, p. 116).

Fear: Three Senses of Meaning Loss

Fear of death is the main source of “fear” in Existentialism. “Being-towards-death is essentially anxiety...it perverts anxiety into cowardly fear ...” (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 310-311). Existentialism acknowledges that death is an inevitable fact and emphasizes individual freedom when facing death. In Brodsky’s poetic creations, we “can feel sadness and melancholy as well as experience horror and fear” (Wang, 2010, p. 47). In his essays, identity and the spiritual elimination of the individual, physical death constitutes the source of fear.

Identity and spiritual erasure of the individual’s existence entails the erasure of identification of meaning and personal characteristics, caused by the hostile and repetitive environment. It erases the value of the individual’s existence, and this triggers fear. “And those stuccoed walls of my classrooms, with their blue horizontal stripe at eye level ... This decor was as maddening as it was omnipresent, and how many times in my life would I catch myself peering mindlessly at this blue two-inch-wide stripe ...” (Brodsky, 1986, p. 9), the repetitive and unaesthetic presence of this hostile environment deprived the individual of spiritual qualities, provoked fear, and impelled him to emphasize the pursuit of beauty in his essays thereafter. “The hostility of the environment grows proportionately to the length of your presence in it... For beauty is solace, since beauty is safe” (Brodsky, 1992, p. 107).

The erasure of individual existence in a substantial sense is the main source of fear. This source is the most obvious and unaffected by any external existence. “...there is no longer any other side to life, and death is a human phenomenon... it influences, against the current, the entire life ... death becomes the meaning of life ...” (Sartre, 2021, p. 664) In essence, the fear of death is the fear of “non-existence”, the fear that individual existence has never had meaning and will never have meaning. “As Auden used to say, Most of all I dread croaking at some big hotel to the consternation of the personnel ...let’s call it nonexistence ...does not want one to divulge its secrets, and scares one out of pondering them with its proximity” (Brodsky, 1996, p. 74). However, poets were in the minority, in front of history, the death of the multitudes was more appalling, and the fear of death of individual existence was more subtle and horrendous. With a sorrowful sarcastic tone, Brodsky described the people who died as a result of building

their city. “Except that in the eighteenth century you knew what you were building and also had a chance in the end to receive the last rites and a wooden cross on the top of your grave” (Brodsky, 1986, p. 73).

The Exit of “Existential Dilemma”: Language and Literature

The existentialist philosophy suggests that the purposelessness of the world inevitably leads to a loss of meaning for existence, but that this meaninglessness can be overcome. As Camus said: “The important thing...is not to be cured, but to live with one’s ailments” (1979, pp. 40-41). Existence is nothingness and absurdity, but everyone is capable of finding the meaning of their existence by rebelling against nothingness and absurdity. The rebellion itself is the meaning. “The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart” (Camus, 1979, p. 111). In Brodsky’s essays, he also found a way to rebel, an exit from the existential dilemma, and this exit was language and literature.

In the literature of analysis of his poems, it is observed that “in addition to kinship, the poet looked to literature, language, and positive personal endeavors to restore the meaning of his own existence” (Yang, 2013, p. 76). “Brodsky was not a pessimistic poet ... but had never given up hope” (Yang, 2016, p. 44). In essays, Brodsky was more straightforward about the role of language.

“A lean, hard face with the abstract glitter of its river reflected in the eyes of its hollow windows” (Brodsky, 1986, p. 4). Such a face is undoubtedly noble, and in it, “those magnificent pockmarked facades behind which ... a faint life was beginning to glimmer” (Brodsky, 1986, pp. 4-5). This was Leningrad just after the siege had been lifted, and the nothingness and absurdity of existence were rampantly exposed in this extreme environment. By this time, Brodsky had not yet formed his views on “language and literature”, but he affirmed the existence of life and hope, which was the premise and foundation of his subsequent initiative to explore the exit from the existential dilemma.

Art enables individual existence to achieve meaning, and, by means of language, artwork is poetry. Brodsky clearly stated that the value of art’s existence lied not in providing escape, but in forcing one to take the initiative to face the painful reality. “...what makes one write is not so much a concern for one’s perishable flesh as the urge to spare certain things of one’s world - of one’s personal civilization - one’s own non-semantic continuum” (Brodsky, 1986, p. 123). Activating the painful reality could not bring hope, existence remained nothingness and absurdity, but as the closest existence to mind, art sought out what reality was incapable of explaining and put the nothingness and absurdity of existence into language. “After all, what distinguishes art from life is the ability of the former to produce a higher degree of lyricism than is possible within any human interplay” (Brodsky, 1986, p. 104). For Brodsky, this recourse was an effective way for individuals to find meaning in their existence and to resist nothingness and absurdity. He also put this into practice in his writing, “one’s eye precedes one’s pen, and I resolve not to let my pen lie about its position” (Brodsky, 1992, p. 21). This realization of the individual’s value was accomplished through the help of specialized skills - literature and poetry - and the individual’s exit out of the existential dilemma was articulated with the minimum standard - the use of language: “the ‘we’ that she starts to use ... against the impersonality of pain inflicted by history was broadened to this pronoun’s linguistic limits ... by the rest of the speakers of this language” (Brodsky, 1986, p. 43).

This idea was reiterated in speeches such as “A Commencement Address”, “Speech at the Stadium”, “An Immodest Proposal”, and “Uncommon Visage”. Among them, “Uncommon Visage” provides the most complete statement on this subject. In this speech, the writer suggested that language and literature were the only strategies to save individuals human existence from all bad situations. The expression “Uncommon Visage” was originally used by the Russian poet Baratynsky when describing and characterizing his muse.

And in this case, muse meant language and literature. “It’s in acquiring this ‘uncommon visage’ that the meaning of human existence seems to lie ...” (Brodsky, 1996, p. 47). This idea was also supplemented in the conversation notes between Brodsky and Volkov. Volkov pointed out Brodsky’s contradiction between the right of the individual to exist and the importance of creativity, to which Brodsky then replied, “that is what existence is ...” (Brodsky & Volkov, 1998, p. 293). For Brodsky, there was no contradiction between the importance of creativity and the right to exist because there was no doubt about the importance of the individual’s existence, but the individual’s existence must seek a way out, which was language and literature.

The Emergence and Disappearance of the Dilemma: Evolution of the Idea and Causes

1968: A Decadent Dream of Nothingness

In these three collections, Brodsky did not give much account of his thought during his youth, and there is only one passage on the question of “existence” in “Watermark”, which describes a decadent dream he had at age 28. The nothingness of existence was so strong that committing suicide became a practical choice. “... buy myself a little Browning and blow my brains out on the spot, unable to die in Venice of natural causes” (Brodsky, 1992, p. 41).

During exile, English and American poetry had a profound influence on Brodsky’s conception of creation, and among them, Robert Frost had an existential influence on him. Brodsky used the expressions “existential dread” and “the absurd” repeatedly when talking about Frost (Loseff, 2006, p. 107). His encounter with Frost and Auden’s works was a landmark event in the development of his existential ideas. Emotional influences also occupied an important place in this period. In 1968, he ended his relationship with his longtime girlfriend, Marina Basmanova. The relationship had a significantly stronger spiritual impact on him than being tried, persecuted, and exiled (Loseff, 2006, p. 98). The tragic end of this relationship resulted in the writing of several “elegiac poems”. In “Winter Twilight at Yalta” written in January 1969, he wrote: “You are beautiful, rather than unrepeatable” (Brodsky, 2011, p. 189). In addition to emotional loss, death was a frequent visitor. During the period from 1965 to 1968, several important people in Brodsky’s life passed away. On January 4, 1965, Eliot died. In July 1965, Frida Vigdorova, a journalist who had been fighting for his release, died. In 1966, Akhmatova died. If Brodsky had only one life mentor in his life, she must be Akhmatova. She taught him forgiveness and love when facing dilemmas and suffering in life, but for the young Brodsky at the time, death overrode everything.

The incomplete influence of existential thought during exile, the tragedy of love and the passing of important people in his life left Brodsky with an overwhelming sense of nothingness, which grew with each passing day and was fully manifested in the decadent dream of 1968.

The Period of “Less Than One” (1977-1986): Finding an Exit

In this period, Brodsky’s thoughts and feelings about “existence” that were reflected in his works acquired obvious positivity. The nothingness and absurdity of existence stayed the same in the relevant narratives, but the existential dilemma had language and literature as an exit.

Brodsky made references to the importance of art, language, and literature in “In the Shadow of Dante”, “The Child of Civilization”, “Footnote to a Poem”, and “The Keening Muse”, but the articulation of a clear point of view had to wait until “To Please a Shadow” in 1983. In this essay, he gave language and literature a unique and irreplaceable role, claiming that they enabled the finite existence of the individual to attain infinity. This year, the enlightening impact of Wystan Auden’s lines, such as “time forgives those who live

by language” (Loseff, 2006, p. 109), finally emerged. In addition, changes in his living environment provided him the objective conditions for finding such a way out. In 1972, Brodsky arrived in the United States after an eventful journey. His financial situation was hardly good, but he no longer needed to fear for his life, and he could write in a relatively stable environment, which was the only thing he cared about. The completely different cultural environment of the United States more or less removed his fears and enabled him to use language and literature more intensively to overcome the nothingness of existence.

The most noticeable feature of Brodsky’s essays during this period is the orientation towards language and literature that developed as an exit for dilemmas and against the nothingness and absurdity of existence. This idea was more clearly articulated and reiterated during the period of “Watermark” and “On Grief and Reason”. The formation of this point of view mainly derived from the understanding and assimilation of the ideas in Auden’s work, the sense of peace and freedom in the living circumstances also played an important role.

The Period of “Watermark” and “On Grief and Reason” (1986-1995): Fading Dilemma and Unfading Exit

During this period, the idea that “language and literature are the only exit out of the existential dilemma” gradually took shape in several of his essays. Meanwhile, the nothingness of the existence of individuals and groups was also repeatedly emphasized. In this stage, the erasure of the individual was no longer to be feared, existence was tied to mundane pleasures, and the nothingness of existence is sanctified (Loseff, 2006, pp. 252-253).

In the 1994 article, this point was made clear. Our severance from history was as unbridgeable as our severance from the future (Brodsky, 1996, p. 291). As in the poetic creations, when exploring the nothingness of existence, time was one of the key concepts involved (Peng, 2014, p. 9). Brodsky ultimately concluded that our sensitivity to time precisely showed the insolubility of the nothingness, and that all attempts to reach the past and future were futile.

During 1983 and 1984, both of Brodsky’s parents died. Neither of them ever saw their son after he moved to the U.S. (Loseff, 2006, p. 239). This was a lifetime regret for Brodsky. The death of his closest relatives cast a shadow of death over his last ten years of transmutation of thought, but the shadow was not a negative one. He no longer feared death, and even spoke to God in a grateful tone in his poetic creations (Loseff, 2006, p. 250). He succeeded in his career. His idea on “language and literature” was astonishing. It became increasingly firm and even extreme, as shown in the title of a speech, An Immodest Proposal. This period was also characterized by changes in his personal life. He suffered from heart attacks. His illness made him feel the presence of death while writing (Loseff, 2006, p. 247). The nothingness of existence turned into the other shore, which was bound to be reached, and his creations were full of a frank foreboding tone. “... once Brodsky realized how short his span of days might be, he abandoned the grim resignation ...” (Loseff, 2006, p. 248). He spent several winters in his favorite place, Venice, and married Maria Sozzani in 1990. In 1993, his daughter Anna was born. His idea of existence became profound, which sanctified the nothingness of existence. The passing of individual existence was inevitable, but there was something that existed for the future. “... Because the city is static ... Because we are headed for the future, while beauty is the eternal present” (Brodsky, 1992, p. 132).

Conclusion

There are many elements of existentialist philosophy in Joseph Brodsky’s main essays, but all the relevant expressions are literary and do not have systematic “existentialist ideology”. His interpretation of existence

is nothingness and absurdity, the loss of meaning of existence triggers fear, and the exit out of this existential dilemma is language and literature.

In terms of evolution, around 1968, “existence” was extreme nothingness. The incomplete influence of existentialism, the tragedy of love and the death of important people were the main factors. In the period from 1977 to 1986, the nothingness and absurdity of existence were unchanged, and the existential dilemma had language and literature as an exit. The impact of Auden’s point of view and changes in living circumstances were the main factors. From 1986 to 1995, language and literature as the exit were confirmed and emphasized, the nothingness of existence was sanctified, and fear disappeared. Various changes in career, family and personal life were the main factors. Throughout the years, the impact of Brodsky’s reading of literature by other authors, his relationships with others and changes in his life circumstances had combined to influence his ideas of “existence” and the gradual evolution of his “existential thought”.

References

- Brodsky, J. (2011). Joseph Brodsky: Poems (vol.1). In A. C. Kushner, K. M. Azadovsky, N. A. Bogomolov, (Eds.), St. Petersburg: Pushkin House Publishing House and Vita Nova Publishing.
- Brodsky, J. (1986). *Less than one*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Brodsky, J. (1996). *On grief and reason*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Brodsky, J. (1992). *Watermark*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Brodsky, J., & Volkov, S. (1998). *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky*. Translated from Russian by Marian Schwartz in 1998. New York: Free Press.
- Camus, A. (1979). *The myth of Sisyphus*. Translated from French by Justin O’Brien in 1955. Aylesbury: Penguin Books.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time*. Translated from German by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson in 1962. Southampton: Basil Blackwell.
- Liu, W. (2014). Essays in poetic form: Brodsky’s On Grief and Reason. *Russian Studies*, 5, 3-25.
- Loseff, L. (2006). *Joseph Brodsky: A literary life*. Translated from Russian by Jane Ann Miller in 2011. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Mao, X. (2018). An introduction to Joseph Brodsky’s poetic and aesthetic viewpoints - From the collection of essays *Less Than One*. *Publishing Wide Angle*, 24, 91-93.
- Peng, Q. (2014). On the matter of time in the poetry of Brodsky. Master’s Thesis. Guangxi University.
- Polukhina, V. (1986). Metaphorical grammar and artistic meaning. In Lev Loseff, (Ed.), *The Poetics of Brodsky*, (pp. 63-96) Tenafly: HERMITAGE.
- Polukhina, V. (1992). *Brodsky through the eyes of his contemporaries*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Sartre, J. P. (2007). *Existentialism is a humanism*. Translated from by Carol Macomber in 2007. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Sartre, J. P. (2021). *Being and nothingness*. Translated from French by Sarah Richmond in 2018. New York: Washington Square Press/Atria.
- Wang, J. (2010). A new Dante stoops down - Russia commemorates the 70th birthday anniversary of J. Brodsky. *Foreign Literary Dynamics*, 3, 46-47.
- Yang, X. (2013). Being-nothingness - Thoughts on human existence in the poetry of Joseph Brodsky. *Foreign Literature*, 6, 70-76.
- Yang, X. (2016). The fear and absurdity of existence - Discussion on Joseph Brodsky’s long poem “Gorbunov and Gorchakov”. *Russian Literature and Art*, 2, 38-45.

Intertextual Techniques in *Lord of the Flies*

Zihe Huang, Yanping Sun^{*1}

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3210101366@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] This paper reexamines Golding's *Lord of the Flies* from the perspective of intertextual techniques, with a focus on the interaction between the texts. It situates the text within a broader cultural context and highlights how the novel's meaning is generated through Golding's use of intertextual techniques, including parody, archetype, symbolism, and reference. The paper achieves mutual referencing and significant correlation with "former texts," such as desert island literature (*Robinson Crusoe*), idyllic adventure literature (*The Coral Island*), *the Bible*, *Paradise Lost*, and more. It provides readers with a fresh lens through which to interpret *Lord of the Flies*, deepening the author's warning about the necessity of recognizing the darkness and ugliness of human nature.

[Keywords] *Lord of the Flies*; William Golding; intertextuality

Introduction

William Golding, born in 1911 in England, is one of the most distinguished novelists from the latter half of the 20th century. William Golding's greatest reputation primarily rests on his first and best novel *Lord of the Flies*, which depicts the transformation into savagery of a group of English schoolboys aged from six to twelve, marooned on a deserted island after a plane crash in a future nuclear war, as imagined by the author. Intertextuality, a term coined by the French semiotician Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s, usually refers to the inter-relations between two or more texts and it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence in modern cultural life. Intertextuality "brings together texts and discourses that refer to each other, that imply each other, that relate to each other, and that reflect upon each other" (Worton & Still, 1990, p. 1). Intertextuality provides possibilities for authors to advance and create some new thoughts, and for readers to reconstruct a new world through dealing with several inter-texts simultaneously. Thus, it will be instructive to read *Lord of the Flies* in the light of intertextuality. *Lord of the Flies* is the intellectual response to particular literary classics preceding it, such as *the Bible*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Coral Island*, etc. To specify and logicalize the intertextual research of *Lord of the Flies*, this paper analyzes the novel in light of its major intertextual techniques and delves into their functions in deepening the theme. The research aims to address the following two questions:

1. What are the primary intertextual techniques employed in *Lord of the Flies*?
2. How do these techniques contribute to a deeper understanding of the novel's themes?

Existing research on intertextual techniques in *Lord of the Flies* is relatively limited. The majority of relevant studies have emerged from China within the last 15 years. Zhong (2008) analyzed *Lord of the Flies* in its use of allusion and parody. Zhong effectively indicated how the novel engages with classical desert island literature, historical accounts of primitive society development, and the myth of Promethean fire from Greek mythology, unveiling the intricate multi-thematic layers within an open context. Du (2020) analyzes intertextuality between Golding's major novels and elaborates on the use of parody, irony, and symbolism between *Lord of the Flies* and *the Bible*, and *The Coral Island*, expanding the research scope of

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: pearlsyp@163.com

Golding's works by means of leaping text study. Yao (2020) explores William Golding's dystopian view in his novels from three aspects, namely human sins, totalitarianism, and anti-hero through analyzing the intertextual relation with its inter-text, *the Bible*, *1984*, and *A Clockwork Orange*.

To enhance this field of study, the types and categories of intertextual techniques should be clarified. Samoyault (2005) categorized intertextual techniques into three types: quotation and reference, parody and pastiche, merger, and collage. Notably, the last category, "merger and collage," could also be considered a form of "reference," as it seamlessly incorporates elements of the pre-text directly into the text without clipping. David Lodge (1994) expounded that there are many ways in which one text interrelates with another: parody, archetype, attachment, allusion, reference, symbolism, parallel construction, etc. This paper focuses on the primarily used intertextual techniques in *Lord of the Flies*, which are parody, archetype, symbolism, and reference, and delves into their functions in deepening the novel's themes.

Parody

According to *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, parody is a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work or works, ridiculing the stylistic habits of an author or school by exaggerated mimicry. Parody is related to burlesque in its application of serious styles to ridiculous subjects to satire in its punishment of eccentricities, and even to criticism in its analysis of style (Baldick, 1990, p. 161). Linda Hutcheon (1985) defines parody as "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" and argues that parody is a self-conscious and reflexive form of intertextuality. Hutcheon highlights how parody functions as a subversive and transformative mode of expression, offering new perspectives and interpretations of the parodied texts. Through the employing of parody, Golding is consciously leading its readers to have a dialogue with other desert island fiction, the most famous one being *Robinson Crusoe*. As for the setting, the story is set on a tropical desert island in the Pacific Ocean, which is paradise-like, rich in fruit, and with a favorable climate. Both novels take place on a deserted island, where the characters are stranded and must survive in isolation. *Lord of the Flies*, like *Robinson Crusoe*, explores the challenges and psychological effects of living in such conditions.

Here the beach was interrupted abruptly by the square motif of the landscape; a great platform of pink granite thrust up uncompromisingly through forest and terrace and sand and lagoon to make a raised jetty four feet high. The top of this was covered with a thin layer of soil and coarse grass and shaded with young palm trees.

(Page 12, *Lord of the Flies*)

As for the subversion of themes, the theme of the traditional desert island fiction centers around the theme of "good defeats evil," and "civilization overcomes barbarity," and their writers cherish an optimistic view of human nature (Zhong, 2008). In *Robinson Crusoe*, after 28 years of life on an uninhabited island, Robinson overcomes various challenges and lives in a civilized way, turning a deserted place into a promising paradise where there is hope, freedom, and a new life. However, Golding subverts the traditional theme and breaks the "desert island myth." The idea of "evil defeats good" pervades the novel from beginning to end. The boys imagine that they can have fun not only in swimming and hunting but also in imposing decent, civilized English values upon their island. Golding intends to reveal that evil is dormant in human nature and he holds a pessimistic viewpoint of human nature. In *Lord of the Flies*, he sets about to show us that "the devil rises, not out of pirates and cannibals and such alien creatures, but out of the darkness of man's heart" (Hynes, 1968, p. 8).

“Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!” ...

“You knew, didn’t you? I’m part of you? Close, close, close! I’m the reason why it’s no go? Why things are the way they are?”

(Page 158, *Lord of the Flies*)

This quote is part of the conversation between Simon and “The *Lord of the Flies*.” In this scene, the head, representing the manifestation of the boys’ inner savagery and fear, taunts Simon with the notion that the Beast they fear is actually within themselves. It suggests that the darkness and destructive tendencies reside within their human nature. The subversion of the themes is the parody of deserted island literature and that is what is conveyed through intertextuality.

Lord of the Flies is also a parody of idyllic adventure literature, and *The Coral Island* is a vivid example. In *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding shows the disillusion of Utopian myth in idyllic adventure novels through parody. First, *The Coral Island* was written during a period of rapid capitalist development. The novel primarily depicts the story of three boys, Ralph, Jack, and Peterkin, who are shipwrecked, stranded on a deserted island, and experience adventures. The author, Ballantyne, presents a capitalist society in an optimistic manner. Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* shares significant similarities with *The Coral Island* in terms of its background, characters, and plots. For instance, both works choose a deserted island as the setting, and the character names in *Lord of the Flies* are deliberately selected to match the names of the characters in *The Coral Island*. The names of the protagonists Ralph and Jack in *The Coral Island* are identical to those of “Jack and Ralph” in *Lord of the Flies*. Simon and Piggy in *Lord of the Flies* are further transformed from Peterkin in *The Coral Island*. Furthermore, *The Coral Island* presents a Utopian vision of boys’ adventures on a deserted island, where they establish a harmonious society. Golding parodies this idealized portrayal by exposing the darker aspects of human nature in *Lord of the Flies*. The descent into violence and the breakdown of order satirizes the naivety and optimism found in *The Coral Island*, challenging the notion of an idyllic island adventure. Golding employs parody as a means to meticulously compare the texts and the original text, highlighting the significant differences and prompting readers to contemplate human nature. Golding criticized the idealized island Adventures. The following statement by Ralph reflects the critique of the idealized portrayal of civilized behavior on a deserted island, reflecting parody and irony, which is similar to that of the parody of deserted island literature.

We’ve got to have rules and obey them. After all, we’re not savages. We’re English; and the English are best at everything.

(Page 47, *Lord of the Flies*)

In some previous studies on the intertextuality of *Lord of the Flies*, scholars tend to mix up deserted island literature with idyllic adventure literature (Du, 2020). But I think there lies great importance in distinguishing them clearly. The deserted island literature focuses more on the deserted environment and the following consequences caused by the environment. While idyllic adventure literature focuses more on the adventure and the bravery in the scenarios. All in all, the parody of deserted island literature and idyllic adventure literature in *Lord of the Flies* works as a refute to optimistic confidence in man and civilization to achieve the effect of irony and that is where the magic of intertextuality lies.

Archetype

An archetype, derived from the Greek words “arche” (meaning “original” or “first”) and “typos” (meaning “pattern” or “model”), refers to universally recognizable symbols, themes, characters, or plot elements that

recur across various literary works, cultures, and time periods. Carl Jung (1999) posited that archetypes are innate and universal, existing within the collective unconscious of all individuals. Archetypes are deeply rooted in the collective unconscious and represent fundamental human experiences, desires, fears, and aspirations. They transcend specific contexts and resonate with readers on a deeper, often subconscious level. Archetypes are implicit and subject to different readers based on their experience and competence.

What first pops into readers' eyes is the title of the novel, *Lord of the Flies*, which is, according to some etymologists, originated from the Greek word 'Beelzebub', which means 'devil' in its origin but was wrongly translated as "the *Lord of the Flies*". As Page (1985) says, "*Lord of the Flies*" is the *Old Testament* name for Beelzebub. Golding's allusion of such a peculiar phrase as the title of his novel is to indicate the evil hidden in man. In the novel, "the *Lord of the Flies*" is the head of a pig, which Jack puts up on a stick to placate an illusory "Beast". As Simon understands, the only dangerous beast (or evil), the true "*Lord of the Flies*", is inside the children themselves.

In terms of character analysis, the leading characters, Jack, and Ralph, as well as the other characters like Simon and Piggy, exhibit varying degrees of intertextual connections with biblical figures. Jack, the leader of the hunters, can be treated as Eve, who yields to temptation and consumes the forbidden fruit. Throughout the novel, Jack leads his group in embracing their dark human impulses, transforming them from civilized individuals into savages. Initially, Jack is constrained by societal norms and civilization, suppressing his aggressive instincts and primal desire for hunting. However, as the story progresses, circumstances gradually push these boys further away from civilization, both in their external appearance and internal behavior. Outwardly, they become disheveled and unkempt, resembling savages. Inwardly, their manic pursuit of hunting satiates their bloodlust and disrupts the foundations of civilization. Similar to Eve, unable to resist the allure of hunting and control their primitive desires and evil instincts, they descend into complete barbarism. If Jack can be seen as Eve, who succumbs to the temptation of the Forbidden Fruit, then Ralph can be regarded as Adam, who is implicated by Eve's actions. Although Ralph symbolizes civilized society, governance, and law, he inevitably becomes influenced by the savagery of the other boys. For instance, despite persistently refusing to participate in hunting and recognizing the urgency and importance of seeking rescue and establishing order, Ralph ultimately succumbs to the temptation of meat and indulges in Jack's prey with satisfaction. Eventually, he is persuaded to partake in hunting and takes pride in hurting a boar. In this sense, Ralph, who embodies civilization, reveals a hidden evil instinct due to his acquiescence to hunting and consumption of meat, mirroring Adam in *the Bible*, who disobeys God's command and consumes the Forbidden Fruit. Simon, acting the role of a religious visionary within the group, is the most enigmatic character in the novel, evoking the image of a prophet or Christ. Simon is the character who unveils the true nature of the beast, consistently aids others through hardships, and assists Ralph in creating smoke signals for rescue. On one hand, Simon can be considered a surrogate for a prophet as he possesses wisdom, maturity, and insight to reveal the truth to his peers, much like a prophet delivering messages or prophecies to humanity. In *the Bible*, prophets are characterized as far-sighted, which aligns with Simon's ability to perceive the latent evil nature of human beings from the story's outset. On the other hand, Simon embodies Christ-like attributes not only through his compassion for the weak and vulnerable but also by displaying the courage of self-sacrifice when he insists on exposing the truth of the beast to everyone, similar to Christ's sacrifice for civilization and truth. Thus, Simon can be seen as a surrogate for both a prophet and Christ within the biblical context.

Overall, the archetypes provide a framework for understanding and interpreting the characters' motivations, actions, and conflicts. It allows readers to draw parallels between the characters' journeys and

those of their biblical counterparts, enriching their complexity and providing a deeper psychological and moral dimension to their development. The archetypes derived from *the Bible* tap into universal themes and narratives that resonate with readers across different cultures and time periods. The exploration of good versus evil, the fall from grace, the struggle between civilization and savagery, and the presence of a higher power are all fundamental themes found in both *the Bible* and *Lord of the Flies*. By employing these archetypes, Golding taps into a collective human understanding and engages readers on a deeper level.

Symbolism

Symbolism in literature is defined as “the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities, imbuing objects, actions, or characters with deeper meanings beyond their literal interpretation.” Symbolism, as a tool within intertextuality, can create links between texts by employing shared symbols or by invoking symbols from one text to enrich the meaning of another. In William Golding’s novel *Lord of the Flies*, symbolism is extensively used to convey a deeper meaning, which is the theme of the inherent human depravity. L.L. Dickson (1990) believed that the symbolism in the novel made *Lord of the Flies* an allegory revealing human nature and compared the desert island in the novel to “Eden”, and the following analysis is based on intertextuality to *Paradise Lost*.

In *Lord of the Flies*, the desert island is like the Garden of Eden, but the boys turn it into a hell. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan and his Allies descend from heaven to hell, a bleak, unlighted abyss. Here, the fall of the children in *Lord of the Flies* coincides with the fall of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Satan is the symbol of the devil, and his fall which is from an angel to a demon is the same as the fall of human nature which is from good to evil. From this perspective, Satan’s fall aligns with the fall of human nature. Both Satan and the children experience a fall from angel to demon. The two works, *Paradise Lost* and *Lord of the Flies*, both begin with meetings. The “Council of Hell” in *Paradise Lost* and the gathering summoned by the “sound of the shell” in *Lord of the Flies*. These meetings are convened because of the initial fall. In *Paradise Lost*, it is the rebellion that leads to the fall to hell. In *Lord of the Flies*, it is the fall to the deserted island caused by the war and plane crash, which symbolizes the destruction of civilization. Then, after the meetings, they decided to establish a new world order. But ultimately, they both end in failure, completing the ultimate fall. These examples of symbolism in *Lord of the Flies* demonstrate how Golding skillfully employs intertextuality to explore the theme of human depravity and the inherent inclination towards chaos and savagery.

In his exploration of the theme of evil, William Golding seeks to find a path that can rescue humanity from the darkness. To some extent, the use of symbolic techniques in *Lord of the Flies* reflects the theme of redemption. In *Lord of the Flies*, Simon’s martyrdom does not save the stranded boys, who continue their way to destruction. While Simon’s archetype is the Prophet or religion to a certain degree, he cannot, like Jesus, redeem humanity with his own life. His death does not change the boys’ fear of the beast, and the truth remains unknown after Simon’s death. Therefore, there is no one bearing the responsibility of conveying the truth to the boys. The souls of the children are almost beyond salvation, indicating that Christ failed in enlightening them. At the end of the novel, though the boys seem to be rescued and their physical bodies redeemed, the appearance of the naval officer only temporarily stops their mutual violence. Thus, they do not experience true redemption, it is a phony rescue. In fact, this clever adaptation of the narrative structure of heaven, loss, repentance, and salvation from *the Bible* by William Golding is a portrayal of his concerns about the lack of faith in modern society, the absence of spiritual support for contemporary individuals, and the resulting moral decline. Therefore, it can be seen as a symbol of redemption.

Overall, symbolism in intertextuality enhances the interconnectivity of *Lord of the Flies* and literary works (*Paradise Lost* and *the Bible* have been mentioned), revealing human depravity and salvation, and Golding's disappointment towards humanity and lack of faith in contemporary society.

Reference

References can take various forms, such as direct quotations, allusions, parodies, or echoes of previous texts. They can be explicit, with direct references to specific works, or more implicit, relying on shared cultural knowledge. *Lord of the Flies* directly references *The Coral Island* in three instances, successfully building intertextuality with *The Coral Island*. Near the beginning of the novel in Chapter 1, there is an ambiguous appearance of *The Coral Island*.

Presently he (Ralph) spoke.

"We got to find the others. We got to do something."

Ralph said nothing. Here was a coral island. Protected from the sun, ignoring Piggy's ill-omened talk, he dreamed pleasantly.

(Page 15, *Lord of the Flies*)

Then in Chapter 2, the boys, in momentary agreement, decide they can have a good time on this island, like "*Treasure Island*" and "*Coral Island*".

Piggy, partly recovered, pointed to the conch in Ralph's hands, and Jack and Simon fell silent. Ralph went on.

"While we're waiting, we can have a good time on this island."

He gesticulated widely.

"It's like in a book."

At once there was a clamor.

"Treasure Island--"

"Swallows and Amazons--"

"Coral Island--"

Ralph waved the conch.

"This is our island. It's a good island. Until the grownups come to fetch us, we'll have fun."

(Page 38, *Lord of the Flies*)

On the last page of the novel, ironically, when the boys are rescued by the naval officer, who imperceptibly comments, "*Jolly good show, like the Coral Island.*"

"We saw your smoke. And you don't know how many of you there are?"

"No, sir."

"I should have thought," said the officer as he visualized the search before him, "I should have thought that a pack of British boys--you're all British, aren't you? --would have been able to put up a better show than that--I mean--"

"It was like that at first," said Ralph, "before things--"

He stopped.

"We were together then--"

The officer nodded helpfully.

“I know. Jolly good show. Like the Coral Island.”

(Page 223, *Lord of the Flies*)

The references to *The Coral Island* in *Lord of the Flies* echo from beginning to end, not only enriching the reading experience but also contributing to the construction of literary meaning. By referencing earlier works, Golding engages in a dialogue with literary traditions, cultural history, and shared narratives, offering new perspectives and interpretations. These references constantly hint at the contrast between the themes of these two works. *Lord of the Flies* shows the darker side of human nature, with boys descending into chaos, revealing innate evil when societal norms are absent. It also demonstrates the fragility of society, as attempts to create order fail, leading to power struggles and violence. *The Coral Island* takes an optimistic stance, depicting boys cooperating harmoniously, upholding moral values despite challenges. It portrays successful society-building, with organized labor, leadership, and unity among boys. The sharp contrast achieves an effect of irony of the positive images of the boys in *The Coral Island* and gives us a serious warning of being aware of the darkness and ugliness of human nature.

Conclusion

This paper reinterprets and explains *Lord of the Flies* from the perspective of intertextuality and intertextual techniques. By the employment of parody, Golding intentionally leads his readers to produce his text by contrasting his text with its inter-texts: the desert island tales such as *Robinson Crusoe*, and idyllic adventure literature such as *The Coral Island*. By ironically rewriting the desert island literature and idyllic adventure literature, *Lord of the Flies* breaks through the traditional theme of “good defeats evil”. The employment of archetype not only provides a framework for understanding the characters’ actions, and conflicts, but also taps into a collective human understanding of good versus evil. The symbolism of depravity and redemption in *Lord of the Flies* demonstrates how Golding skillfully employs intertextuality to explore the theme of human depravity and the inherent inclination towards chaos and savagery. The references to *The Coral Island* in *Lord of the Flies* show a strong contrast which not only unveils the ugliness of humanity, but also enriches the readers’ reading experience. In a nutshell, in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding utilizes various intertextual techniques such as parody, archetype, symbolism, and reference, illuminating the intricate connections between the novel and other literary classics. Golding’s aim is to impart a grave cautionary message: if the inherent evil of human nature remains unchecked, it will pose a great threat to our society. Golding sincerely hopes that every individual can recognize the underlying human flaws and the looming societal crisis. He urges us to take the initiative to construct our civilization in a better way.

Intertextuality, as the primary mode of reading and perception, highlights that no text exists in isolation but is interconnected within a network of other texts that have been written and read before. *Lord of the Flies*, like any other text, can be approached with various pretexts. The interpretation of a text is an ongoing process, influenced by individual readers with diverse literary competencies, and through continuous interpretation, the meaning of a text becomes enriched.

References

- Baldick, C. (1990). *The concise Oxford dictionary of literary terms*, (p. 161). Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dickson, L. L. (1990). *The modern allegories of William Golding*, (p. 5). Tampa: University of South Florida Press.

- Du, Q. (2020). *A study on intertextuality in William Golding's novels*. Southwest University, MA thesis.
- Golding, W. (1958). *Lord of the flies*. London: Faber & Faber Ltd.
- Hutcheon, L. (1985). *A theory of parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen.
- Hynes, S. (1968). *William Golding*, (p. 8). Columbia: Columbia University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1999). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*. New York: Bollingen Foundation Inc. and Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House. Chengcheng Books LTD.
- Lodge, D. (1994). *The art of fiction*, (pp. 110-114). Penguin Books.
- Page, N. (1985). *William Golding novels, 1954-67: A Casebook*, (p. 15). Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Samoyault, T. (2005). *Intertextuality: Memory of literature*, (p. 36). Paris: Armand Colin.
- Worton, M. J., & Still, J. A. (1990). *Intertextuality: Theories and practices*, (p. 1). Manchester University Press.
- Yao, Y. (2020). *Take Lord of the Flies as an example: An interpretation of Golding's dystopian thought from the perspective of intertextuality*. Xi'an International Studies University, MA thesis.
- Zhong, X. (2008). *Allusions and parody: Lord of the Flies from the perspective of intertextuality*. Jiangxi Normal University, MA thesis.

From *Daode Jing* to *The Earthsea Cycle*: Le Guin’s Translation and Transformation of Daoist Thoughts

Yu Jiao, Lei Du*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 1834979286@qq.com

[Abstract] Known as an acclaimed science fiction and fantasy writer, Ursula Le Guin grew up with a strong interest in Daoist thoughts, and those ideas inform a great deal of her writing of *The Earthsea Cycle*, considered one of her representative works with distinct Daoist features. Concepts in the story, such as everything has its “true name”, the natural law of equilibrium, and the relationship between “life” and “death”, “light” and “darkness” are all inspired by *Daode Jing* and other works of Daoism. This paper introduces her deep interplay with Daoism and analyzes in detail the Daoist thought in *The Earthsea Cycle*.

[Keywords] *The Earthsea Cycle*; Daoism; Ursula Le Guin; *Daode Jing*

Introduction

Ursula K. Le Guin (1929-2018) was an American writer best known for her works of fantasy and science fiction. Influenced by her parents, she had a great interest in Daoist thought. She had poetically translated *Daode Jing*, adding her understanding to it, and the Daoist ideas eventually shaped her writing style, which can be seen in many of her books, such as *The Earthsea Cycle*, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and *The Dispossessed*. There has been research on the Daoist features of her works and the characteristics of her interpretation of Daoist ideas. This paper introduces Le Guin’s translation of *Daode Jing* and analyzes her transformation of Daoist thought, especially the ideas in *Daode Jing*, using *The Earthsea Cycle* as an example.

Le Guin’s Translation of *Daode Jing*

Le Guin mentioned that her upbringing lacked strong religious influence. Growing up in a free, open-minded, and relaxing family environment from a young age, she was able to critically examine the entire human civilization and maintain an equal attitude toward all religions, races, and cultures. During her adolescence, she developed a strong fascination with Daoism and Buddhism, crediting Daoism with providing her valuable insights on approaching life. Furthermore, in 1997, she released her own interpretation of the *Daode Jing*. Her annotated translation of *Daode Jing* is “poetic” in style and infused with some of her own interpretations, unlike the scholarly versions, enjoying a high popularity among the general readers. With almost no knowledge of the Chinese language, she didn’t translate *Daode Jing* in a way a scholar would do, nor did she have any formal practice of Daoism (Steed, 2022). Instead, she relied more on her intuition and focused more on its philosophical aspects, through which she reimagined Daoism as a creative artist and philosopher in her own right (Mills, 2020). It was on this basis that she penned her science fictions, and it was evident that there existed a constant interaction between her novel writing and her obsession with *Daode Jing*, which is hard to find in the cases of other western writers.

¹ * Corresponding author. Email address: lei.du@zju.edu.cn

Le Guin's Transformation of *Daode Jing*

The *Earthsea Cycle* is a highly prestigious piece of Western science fiction. Unlike many Western fantasy works, *The Earthsea Cycle* still adopts the images of sorcerers, mages, and other images typical of traditional European fantasy literature, but behind its Western cultural “form” lies an Eastern “soul”. The writing of the *Earthsea Cycle* took a long span of 20-odd years: from the first novel in this series: *A Wizard of Earthsea*, in 1986, to its last, *The Other Wind*, in 2012. Moreover, there was an 18-year gap between the third book *The Farthest Shore* and the fourth, *Tehanu*. During this long time, Le Guin's views had developed considerably. But throughout the entire cycle, the stories have always been constructed on the basis of Daoist thought. Looking at the worldview of *the Earthsea Cycle*, it is easy to find the trace of classic ideas of Daoism, such as “balance” and “yin and yang theory”. However, Le Guin did not impose these Daoist ideas on her works, but rather “reconstructed” them to a certain extent, combined them with her own understanding, and integrated them into a Western world of fantasy.

The “True Name”

In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, the author builds a world of Earthsea consisting of many islands and oceans. The world runs on magic, which is rooted in the *names* of things. Le Guin defines a *name* as a symbol of something's identity, distinguishing it from other things and representing its true self; More importantly, mastery of a thing's name is the basis for manipulating and utilizing that thing.

The *names* here, however, are not the ordinary words used by the people of the Earthsea, but the names in the language of Segoy, who created the islands of the world. By speaking the “true names” of the islands, Segoy lifted up the islands of the Earthsea and created the world of the Earthsea, and through the true names, the people of the world of the Earthsea learned about things, controlled things, and realized the nature of things. When introducing Ogion was introducing plants to Ged, he said: “*When you know the fourfoil in all its seasons root and leaf and flower, by sight and scent and seed, then you may learn its true name, knowing its being*” (Le Guin, 2012). Furthermore, everything can only have one true name, and the true name of one thing is changeable, which implies the uniqueness and flexibility of things. “*Here is the reason. The sea's name is inien, well and good. But what we call the Inmost Sea has its own name also in the Old Speech. Since nothing can have two true names, inien can mean only `all the sea except the Inmost Sea`*” (Le Guin, 2012).

Many of the stories of the Earthsea world are centered on the true names. Ged, who created a shadow that seemed to have no true name, was filled with fear because of his creation. Eventually, he defeated the shadow by discovering his true name; Tenar, a young girl who was taken from her true name and imprisoned in the tomb of Atuan, recalled her true name with the help of Ged and regained hope for a free life.

In the setting of the Earthsea world, the concept of “true name” is similar to the concept of “Dao” in *Daode Jing* as understood by Ursula Le Guin. In the opening of *Daode Jing*, Laozi writes:

“The Dao that can be told is not the eternal Dao.

The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The nameless is the beginning of heaven and Earth.

The named is the mother of the ten thousand things.”

(道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。无名天地之始，有名万物之母。)

There have been differences as to how these two kernel sentences should be understood, and in Le Guin's version, they are translated as:

"The way you can go isn't the real way.

The name you can say isn't the real name.

Heaven and earth begin in the unnamed:

Name's the mother of the ten thousand things" (Le Guin, 1998).

"Name" is an important part of Laozi's philosophy, a specific name for "Dao", which contains the meaning of concepts, but is higher than concepts, and has the meaning of unity of name and content, i.e., the form or appearance of Tao as it is practically deduced in space and time. Thus, "name" is not a single concept in Laozi and his *Daode Jing*, but a concrete embodiment of "Dao". Le Guin gives it a more fantastical interpretation and visualization. She interpreted "Dao" and "name" as things that cannot be easily reached or spoken of. What is revealed to the public is only the appearance of things, and appearances are deceptive, so to the public, the essence is "inaccessible" and "ineffable". The seeker, on the other hand, must go beyond appearances and see through to the essence of things. In Le Guin's translation, "namelessness" and "name" are expressed as two separate concepts, with *name* being the mother of all things. It is because of the *name* that everything is born in human thought. This corresponds to the setting of the true name in the world of Earthsea. The true name was created at the beginning of the world, and to understand the true name is to understand the essence of a thing. In the story, Ged has seen through his opponent's true name many times because he has cultivated a strong ability to see the essence of things through their appearances.

"Equilibrium" and the Daoist Concept of "Balance"

In *Earthsea*, nature contains unparalleled power and has its own laws. Sorcery does not arise and disappear out of nowhere. On the contrary, any sorcery is performed with the help of the sorcerer's connection with nature, and at the same time, they all have a corresponding impact on the overall ecology of the Earthsea. When a sorcerer uses his power to change the law of nature, there will be detrimental effects on the world of sorcery and on the wielder himself. In *The Farthest Shore*, the words Ged said to Arren exemplified the concept of equilibrium.

"Do you see, Arren, how an act is not, as young men think, like a rock that one picks up and throws, and it hits or misses, and that's the end of it. When that rock is lifted, the earth is lighter; the hand that bears it heavier. When it is thrown, the circuits of the stars respond, and where it strikes or falls the universe is changed. On every act the balance of the whole depends. The winds and seas, the powers of water and earth and light, all that these do, and all that the beasts and green things do, is well done, and rightly done. All these act within the Equilibrium" (Le Guin, 2012).

In *Wizard of Earthsea*, Ged's bold attempt to summon the undead which upsets the balance between life and death resulted in the summoning of a shadow that had threatened him for years. And in *The Tombs of Atuan*, Ged tells Tenar that the earth is both beautiful and bright and dangerous and horrible and that one should realize one's ignorance and the limits of magic. On Roke, where the school for wizards is located, the mages teach their students that everything in the world follows the principle of Equilibrium, which means that there is a delicate balance between everything and that all things are interconnected and in balance with each other. The ability of a sorcerer to summon and change is dangerous. Therefore, when

casting spells, one must abide by the laws of nature, focus on the connection between things, and maintain this balance. The uncontrolled casting of powerful forces can be counterproductive and destructive. Under the influence of this principle, most wizards in the Earthsea World also advocate “doing nothing”, following the laws of nature as much as possible, casting spells only when necessary, and constantly scrutinizing their own desires and restraining their actions. As a powerful mage, Ogion lived nearly all his life in a small house in the mountains, listening to nature, never asking for reputation and wealth. The concept of never doing what’s more than needed reached out further to a world of non-wizards, in the last three books, when Ged has lost his power, he returned to Gont far away from Havnor, where he can enjoy fame and wealth. This “balance “ in nature and its derivation, “Doing nothing”, is also derived from Daoist thought “Wu Wei” (无为).

Chapter 77 of the *Daode Jing* describes the way of nature as being like drawing a bow and shooting an arrow: if the string is drawn too high, it must be lowered; if it is too low, it must be raised; if it is drawn too full, it must be loosened; if it is too loose, it must be given more force... Only when the overall balance is maintained can the natural world function properly. As for what people should do, Laozi said: “*Better to stop short than fill to the brim. Oversharpen the blade, and the edge will soon blunt. Amass a store of gold and jade, and no one can protect it. Claim wealth and titles, and disaster will follow. Retire when the work is done. This is the way of heaven*” (持而盈之，不如其已；揣而锐之，不可长保。金玉满堂，莫之能守；富贵而骄，自遗其咎。功成身退，天之道也). People should not upset the balance and go to extremes because of the power and wealth they own but follow the laws of nature. If one disregards the laws, one may make a mistake with terrible consequences. “We Wei” means following the nature, not act passively all the time (Zhang & Zhang, 2020). By restraining the influence of subjective consciousness, following the laws of things themselves, and focusing on maintaining balance, one can truly utilize one’s own power. Le Guin translates the title of chapter 9 of *Daode Jing* as “Be Quiet”, and it is easy for the reader to associate it with his image of the shamans who, with the principle of unity and balance in mind, follow the laws of nature and draw their power from silence.

From “Light” and “Darkness”, “Life” and “Death” to See Yin and Yang

The title page of *The Wizard of Earthsea* bears the song “The Creation of Ea”:

Only in silence the word,

only in dark the light,

only in dying life:

bright the hawk’s flight on the empty sky (Le Guin, 2012).

This beautiful poem contains strong Daoist thoughts and sets the tone of the entire work, which is characterized by the unity of opposites and the symbiosis of yin and yang. In the worldview of Earthsea, the interdependence of “life” and “death”, “darkness” and “light” is a continuation of the concept of balance, the “Equilibrium.”

The unity of light and darkness can be seen in Le Guin’s creation of the character “Shadow” in *Wizard of the Earthsea*. As mentioned above, the Shadow appears at Ged’s calling, and it is black, ugly, and evil, contrasting sharply with Ged’s powerful and positive image. Throughout the story, the Shadow remains as the physical manifestation of the Darkness, with an unknown identity and origin. Ged chases the dark shadow to the end of the world after countless hardships and finally shouts out the name of the dark shadow, which is his own name. Light and darkness meet, intersect, and unite on the open sea at the

edge of the world. Ged embraces his dark shadow and makes himself whole, becoming a man who knows his whole true self. Before confronting his shadow, he explained power in this way: “*All power is one in source and end, I think. Years and distances, stars and candles, water and wind and wizardry, the craft in a man’s hand and the wisdom in a tree’s root: they all arise together. My name, and yours, and the true name of the sun, or a spring of water, or an unborn child, all are syllables of the great word that is very slowly spoken by the shining of the stars. There is no other power. No other name*” (Le Guin, 2012). His description of power also explained the underlying unity behind things that look different and even contrasting.

The unity of opposites between “life” and “death” is deeply explored in *The Farthest Shore*. The wizard Cob, out of his fear of death, wants to unilaterally deny death and pursue eternal life, not only losing his own soul but also plunging the world into a state of emptiness. As a consequence of his balance-destroying behavior, the power of magic gradually disappeared, and people even forgot the meaning of existence and fell into emptiness. He opens the door between life and death, thinking that he has conquered death, not realizing that his actions negate the meaning of existence. Lebannen, who chases Cob with Ged, has a profound discussion with Ged on the topic of life and death out of fear of death, while the author uses Ged’s mouth to say that only accepting death means accepting a meaningful life.

Both of these oppositions and unifications can be categorized as the opposition and unification of yin and yang under Daoist thought (Wang, 2013). As shown in the Taiji diagram, yin and yang are opposites on the surface, but in fact, they are first and foremost in each other’s movement, and the combination of the two forms a dynamic whole.

Conclusion

Ursula Le Guin grew up under the strong influence of Daoism and has formed her own understanding on this subject. The ideas of Taoism were expressed not only in her translated version of *Daode Jing* but also merged into her science fiction and fantasy works. The *Earthsea Cycle* is one of the novel series she wrote that has the traits of a Daoist influence. Through the worldviews of “true name”, “Equilibrium”, “life” and “death”, “light” and “darkness” and the unity of opposites, etc., Le Guin shaped a world of Earthsea under the Daoist thought. In such a world, the characters develop colorful lives and explore their own paths of growth under the guidance of Daoist thought, constantly developing from the understanding of the Dao to the practice of the Dao.

The emergence of such a work stems not only from the author’s ingenuity in the creative process but also from her deep understanding of Daoist thought. The Daoist ideas contained in the *Earthsea Cycle* are still of great inspiration to the present day. Although the series does not utilize any explicit Daoist cultural symbols, the value it brings to people’s minds is far greater than the significance of the symbols, and it truly lets people understand the charm of Daoist thought through the stories.

References

- Le Guin, U. K. (1998). *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching: A book about the way and the power of the way*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications
- Le Guin, U. K. (2012) *A wizard of Earthsea*, vol. 1. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
- Le Guin, U. K. (2012). *The tombs of Atuan*. New York City: Simon and Schuster.
- Le Guin, U. K. (2012). *The farthest shore*. New York City: Simon and Schuster.

- Mills, E. (2020). Ursula K. Le Guin's science fictional feminist Daoism. *Journal of Science Fiction and Philosophy*, 3, 1-21.
- Steed, R. (2022). A note on Ursula K. Le Guin's Daoist interests. *Mythlore*, 40(2), 185-191.
- Wang, Y. (2013). Interpretation of Ursula Le Guin's Oriental philosophy--Taking *The Earthsea Cycle* as an example. *The Great Wall*, (02), 37-38.
- Zhang, S., & Zhang, S. (2020) A study on the idea of ecological balance in the Earthsea Trilogy. *Journal of Zhejiang Institute of Foreign Languages*, (05), 96-101.

Virginia Woolf's View of Self in *Mrs. Dalloway* and Mencius's "Wan Wu" Proposition

Shuiqingyun Liu, Fen Gao*

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3210106070@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] Mencius's "Wan Wu Jie Bei Yu Wo" (万物皆备于我) is an important proposition that reveals the essence of self and the paths and the highest realm to realize self-perfection. While Virginia Woolf also presents vividly the nature of self in her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, there is a commonality between the two. Based on Mencius's theory of "Wan Wu", this parallel research discloses that Woolf displays two paths in her novels to present the realization process, the characters' self-perfection, and the supreme realm of life. The first path is self-reflection, which echoes Mencius's "Fan Shen Er Cheng" (反身而诚) and is reflected in the characters' memory and perception of the important moments of life. The second path is to extend oneself to others, which echoes Mencius's "Qiang Shu Er Xing" (强恕而行) and is embodied in the characters' forgiveness of the hurt and hatred of others. The highest realm of life that the novel finally achieves is "love", which is similar to Mencius' "Qiu Ren" (求仁), which is realized through the transcendence of death.

[Keywords] Virginia Woolf; *Mrs. Dalloway*; Wan Wu Jie Bei Yu Wo; Mencius

Introduction

In her masterpiece *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Virginia Woolf, a modern English writer, vividly describes the paths of life and death in a juxtaposition way, highlighting the essence of self and the paths and the highest realm of the perfection of life against death. It is reflected in her creative intention, which she repeatedly clarified in *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*: her creative goal is to "give life and death, sanity and insanity" (Woolf, 2010, p. 248), and to describe "the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side" (Woolf, 2010, p. 207).

This paper tries to do parallel research on Woolf's and Mencius's view of self. Even though Woolf is a representative of Western modernism while Mencius is a master of Oriental philosophy, they share the same ability to reflect on life. Woolf's works usually require a "long and dedicated expedition into the interior" (Briggs, 2006, p. 238), while in Chinese culture, reflections on life are generally manifested in either philosophy or literature, which makes life reflection the basis of Chinese philosophy and poetry. Mencius's proposition "Wan Wu Jie Bei Yu Wo" is applicable to analyzing *Mrs. Dalloway*, because it reveals the essence of self, echoing *Mrs. Dalloway* in terms of its process of realizing self. Besides, Woolf had read and perceived much about Chinese thinking. For example, Woolf was close friends with sinologists Laurence Binyon and Arthur Waley, who translated *The Analects of Confucius* and wrote *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, including the thoughts of Chuang Tzu and Mencius. Woolf had once thanked Waley for his abundant knowledge of Chinese in *Orlando* (1992, p. 5). Woolf had commented on Herbert Giles's translations of Pu Songling's stories in a 1913 review (Laurence, 2013, pp. 380-381). Woolf's experience of reading Chinese culture may help us better understand Woolf's view of self, and we will focus on the similarities between an English writer's and a Chinese philosopher's view of self.

* Corresponding author. Email address: gfd2002@163.com

The British and American academic circles have researched the narrative mode and theme of the juxtaposition of life and death in *Mrs. Dalloway* and put forward two viewpoints, antagonism and harmony. Scholars who hold the view of antagonism believe that Woolf represents the conflict between two opposing views. For instance, Harper believes that it embodies the “essential and dialectical struggle” between “opposite adaptations in the world” (1982, p. 127), and Fleishman believes that it represents the “opposition between two views of life that Woolf alternately entertained” (1975, p. 94). Critics who hold the view of harmony point out that Woolf’s juxtaposition of life and death is harmonious and unified. For example, J. Hillis Miller argues that the novel represents “a universal consciousness or social thought” by integrating the stream of consciousness of all characters with an omniscient hidden narrator (1985, p. 388), and Caughie argues that the whole novel embodies how harmony is perceived and constructed (1991, p. 75). However, academic circles seldom notice that Woolf’s juxtaposition of life and death is essentially an attempt to reveal the critical characteristics of the sound self and the paths to self-perfection with the contrast of death, and few people analyze Woolf’s insight into the self from a philosophical perspective, which is what this paper intends to explore.

The main questions to be discussed in this paper include: Do Mencius’s theory of “Wan Wu” and Woolf’s view of self have intrinsic commonality? What are the two paths to self-perfection that Woolf describes in *Mrs. Dalloway*? What is the highest realm of self attained in *Mrs. Dalloway*?

Mencius’s Theory of “Wan Wu” and Woolf’s View of Self

Mencius’s proposition “Wan Wu Jie Bei Yu Wo” not only deeply reveals the essence of self, but also clarifies the paths and the highest realm of self-perfection, which can provide a useful academic basis for an in-depth analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which Woolf also aims to disclose the self.

Mencius’s proposition of “Wan Wu” is very important but puzzling, and it has aroused the attention of many scholars in the history of more than two thousand years in China, and many different interpretations have been offered. The full text of Mencius’s proposition consists of three sentences derived from *Mencius · Full Heart*. The text reads as follows:

“Mencius said: *Wan Wu Jie Bei Yu Wo Yi* (万物皆备于我矣). *Fan Shen Er Cheng* (反身而诚), *Le Mo Da Yan* (乐莫大焉). *Qiang Shu Er Xing* (强恕而行), *Qiu Ren Mo Jin Yan* (求仁莫近焉).” (Mencius, 2016, p. 239)

Mencius’ first sentence, “Wan Wu Jie Bei Yu Wo” highlights the essence of the self. Here, the literal meaning of “Wan Wu” (万物) refers to all things in the world, yet it implicitly indicates the “principles of all things”, which is the first key point of academic controversy. “Jie” (皆) means “all”, which is obvious. “Bei” (备) means “perfection”. “Yu” (于), the passive voice, plays a grammatical function. The literal meaning of “Wo” is the individual “I”, and its extended meaning refers to “the self”, which is the second key point of academic controversy. It can be seen that the objective of this proposition is to clarify the relationship between “Wan Wu” and “Wo”. From different perspectives, academic circles have roughly come up with two different kinds of explanations.

One is to interpret the proposition from the perspective of epistemology, represented by Zhao Qi, an expert on Mencius studies in the Han Dynasty, who believes that “Wan Wu refers to all things. Wo means the human body. After an individual grows up to be an adult, he is ready to know all things in the world and then begins to act” (1999, p. 353). In general, from a cognitive point of view, the meaning of Mencius’s first sentence is simple and clear: each individual is able to know all things in the world.

The second offers interpretations based on moral theory, and the scholars who hold this view are generally Confucian and Taoist scholars, who pay more attention to the implicit connotations of “Wan Wu” and “Wo”. They believe that “Wan Wu” refers to “the principles of all things”, which include the principles of morality (such as respect, benevolence, wisdom, loyalty, faith, justice, etc.), and the principles of mind and humanity (such as the original heart, conscience, etc.), in short, including all principles between man and man, man and society, man and nature, etc. “Wo” refers to the “self” of every human being, which is subjective and moral, and has the ability to search outwards and inwards. The representative of this interpretation is Chinese philosopher Zhu Xi, who interprets it in *Zhu Zi Yu Lei*: “Wan Wu does not refer to all things physically; Wan Wu indicates the principles of all things within the self” (1988, p. 1438). In general, from the perspective of moral theory, the meaning of Mencius’s first sentence is complex and profound: The principles of all things have been given to the self. Zhu Xi elaborates on Mencius’ philosophy from the perspective of Neo-Confucianism in *Commentary on the Four Books* and believes that Mencius’ statement “reveals the essence of principle [...] This speaks of the completeness of the principles of all things within oneself. By practicing them, ways can be found within oneself, and benevolence can be practiced with delight. By carrying out acts of forbearance, selfishness will be eliminated, and benevolence can be achieved” (万物皆备于我矣,此言理之本然也[...]此章言万物之理具于吾身,体之而实,则道在我而乐有余行之以恕,则私不容而仁可得) (2011, p. 328). It is valuable that Zhu Xi discloses that Mencius’ statement refers to the moral norms of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom between ruler and subject, father and son, and it aligns with Mencius’ original intention. It is valuable, for it fully expresses the thought of Confucius’s Philosophy, which can be traced back to the ideological origins of Confucius and *the Doctrine of the Mean*. Confucius always emphasizes “benevolence”, and “to subdue oneself and return to propriety is benevolence” (克己复礼为仁) (qtd. in Xun Qian, 2007, p. 141), while Mencius regards forbearance as a means to seek benevolence, inheriting the tradition of Confucius. In fact, Mencius’ ideas originate from the concept of “without sincerity, there is nothing” (不诚无物) in *The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean* (qtd. in Wang Guoxuan, 2007, p. 112). Sincerity is both moral cultivation and the principle of nature in the world.

In the last two sentences of Mencius’ proposition, he further discusses the path of self-perfection. The first path is “self-reflexive and sincere”. Here, “Fan” means reflection, and “Shen” refers to “self”, which is synonymous with “Wo” in the previous sentence. “Cheng” means “true and sincere” (Ye, 2020, 69). In other words, Mencius points out that the first path to self-improvement is: to reflect on oneself and keep oneself true and sincere. The second path proposed by Mencius is “Qiang Shu Er Xing” (强恕而行). “Qiang” (强) means “to do one’s best, to exert oneself”. “Shu” (恕) means “to extend oneself to others”, and in *Analects of Confucius* it is interpreted as “what you don’t want for yourself, don’t do to others” (己所不欲, 勿施于人) (2007, p. 142). “Xing” (行) means “to do”. That is to say, Mencius’s second self-improvement path is to be considerate of others. While clarifying the path of self-perfection, Mencius also explains the highest realm the self can achieve, that is, “Le” (乐) and “Ren” (仁). “Le” refers to happiness; “Ren” is “love”, which is generally considered a moral category and realm. Therefore, the general implication of the last two sentences is self-reflection and sincerity, that is happiness; and extending oneself to others and empathizing with others, which is the highest state of love.

Woolf depicts the self in several novels, of which the novel *To the Lighthouse* presents a complete view. In the first part of *To the Lighthouse*, the main character, Mrs. Ramsey, was alone in her room quietly knitting socks when she fell into a deep meditation and truly “felt her” (2021, p. 53). She compared the “dark, spreading, unfathomable” self to “a wedge-shaped core of darkness” (Woolf, 2021, p. 53), and

described her perception of the nature of the self in layers. First of all, she felt that the self had an extremely strong cognitive ability, which allowed her to recognize the boundless expanse of the world, and to enter places she had never been to before. “Her horizon seemed to her limitless. There were all the places she had not seen; the Indian plains; she felt herself pushing aside the thick leather curtain of a church in Rome. This core of darkness could go anywhere, for no one saw it. They could not stop it, she thought, exulting.” (Woolf, 2021, p. 54) Then she realized that the self was extremely perceptive and that she could unify herself with the things in front of her. “Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at – that light, for example.” (Woolf, 2021, p. 54) Further, she felt that she knew the principles beneath the appearances: “[w]ith her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit; she knew that” (Woolf, 2021, p. 55). Finally, the self allowed her to feel great happiness. “[B]ut for all that she thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotized, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, [...] the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough!” (Woolf, 2021, p. 56). Woolf’s portrayal of the self reveals that the self has the power to know the world, to merge with things, to comprehend principles, and to reach the highest realm, and its portrayal is essentially the same as that of “Wan Wu Jie Bei Yu Wo”.

Two Paths to Realize Self-perfection

Woolf shows the paths and the highest realm of self-improvement in *Mrs. Dalloway*, which resembles the two paths proposed by Mencius to realize self-perfection. She writes about ways of self-perception and their processes through contrasting different characters.

Self-reflection and Keeping Sincere

The first path to self-improvement for the different characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* is self-reflection and keeping sincere, which echoes Mencius’s “Fan Shen Er Cheng”. The different ways in which the characters reflect determine the degree of self-improvement they achieve. We will compare and contrast the different ways of self-reflection and the processes of self-improvement of the fictional characters Mrs. Dalloway, Peter Walsh, and Septimus Smith to illustrate the value of this path.

Clarissa Dalloway was highly self-reflective. It was through constant introspection about her love and marriage that she reaffirmed her choices. Because she was always faithful to her true self and treated others with sincerity, she was able to live her life with continuous love, passion, as well as kindness. Reflecting on her feminine fate, she insisted that she had made the right choice by not marrying Peter, because, for marriage, “a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house” (Woolf, 2010, p. 5)¹. She realized that “with Peter everything had to be shared [...] it was intolerable” (Woolf, 2010, p. 5). Richard was quiet but very pragmatic. Though he did not express love in such a direct way as Peter did, he gave Clarissa enough independence and dignity. As Clarissa reconfirmed: “one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one’s husband, without losing one’s independence, one’s self-respect [...]” (Woolf, 2010, p. 74). In addition, Clarissa carefully reflected on her role as a mother and retained her individuality, not becoming a birth-giving machine. Indeed, Clarissa only gave birth to

¹ All novel citations from Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (South Australia: eBooks @ Adelaide, 2010) have page numbers only.

Elizabeth instead of a group of children. Besides, she reflected on her homosexual love for Sally Seton. As she asked herself, “had not that, after all, been love?” (Woolf, 2010, p. 20) Sally ran naked and disobeyed her parents. In Clarissa’s eyes, this kind of character was precisely what she lacked, and she had always admired it. Through her reflection on Sally, she realized that “[s]he knew nothing about sex -- nothing about social problems” (Woolf, 2010, p. 21). Therefore, she began to “read Plato in bed before breakfast; read Morris; read Shelley by the hour” (Woolf, 2010, p. 21) and desired to “found a society to abolish private property” (Woolf, 2010, p. 21).

Septimus Smith lost the ability to self-reflect due to the trauma of the war, and whenever he recalled the war, he was filled with fear and despair. And because he was unable to self-reflect, he failed to grasp the meaning of life. The suffering of being a survivor had destroyed his ability to self-reflect, failing to save him from illusions. He was overwhelmed by the horrible reality; he “saw faces laughing at him, calling him horrible disgusting names, from the walls, and hands pointing round the screen” (Woolf, 2010, p. 41). He could have seen meaning in life if he had adjusted his perspective. However, Septimus failed to reflect on himself because whenever he tried to do so, he “let himself think about horrible things” (Woolf, 2010, p. 41). He asserted that “[he] knew the meaning of the world” but he criticized “how wicked people were; how he could see them making up lies [...]” (Woolf, 2010, p. 41). Besides, his wife, Lucrezia Smith, cared for and loved him so much but was only treated by his coldness and madness. However, Septimus never reflected on himself, always thinking that “their marriage was over, [...] with agony, with relief” (Woolf, 2010, p. 42). Whenever one loses the ability to reflect on oneself, the connection between the inner self and the outer world can never be built, and meanings are hardly seen by those like Septimus. The problem is rooted in the self, yet he lacks the ability to discover it, to identify it, and to break out of it. Thus, “it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning” (Woolf, 2010, p. 54), and Septimus had no choice but death.

As an extremely egoistic person, Peter lacks the ability to reflect on himself, thus living a life in a constant state of failure. Only in his dream was he able to understand the essence of life. For example, his relationship with Clarissa was a failure because he seldom reflected on his terrible words and the depression he imposed on Clarissa. He was so proud and childish that he never felt wrong. Despite being tightly controlled by her patriarchal father and aunt in Burton, Clarissa was forthright and sincere, attracting everyone’s attention. However, Peter always referred to her as “cold, heartless” (Woolf, 2010, p. 5), even criticizing her as the “death of the soul” (Woolf, 2010, p. 36). Peter was so self-centred that his words hurt Clarissa in a direct but invisible way. Peter regarded himself as “an adventurer, reckless, [...] swift, daring, [...] a romantic buccaneer” (Woolf, 2010, p. 33), but criticized Clarissa for being “timid; hard; something arrogant; unimaginative; prudish” (Woolf, 2010, p. 37). And only in his dream, he was given a sense of peace, displaying the significance of “compassion, comprehension, absolution” (Woolf, 2010, p. 36). He finally realized the truth of the self that there was “a positive need to brush, scrape, kindle” (Woolf, 2010, p. 99) the self.

To conclude, Clarissa Dalloway best practiced Mencius’s “Fan Shen Er Cheng”; Septimus was on the opposite side of it and Peter nearly failed. Through self-reflection on marriage and friendship, Mrs. Dalloway successfully improved herself, returning to a sincere state; unable to self-reflect or only self-examine in dreams, Septimus committed suicide and Peter lived his life with continuous failure.

Extending Oneself to Others and Empathizing with Them

The second path to self-perfection in *Mrs. Dalloway* is to extend oneself to others and to empathize with them, a path that echoes Mencius's "Qiang Shu Er Xing". The characters' different strengths of self-effacement and empathy determine their degree of self-perfection. The importance of this path will be illustrated by a comparative examination of the different ways of empathizing with others of the fictional characters Mrs. Dalloway, Miss Kilman, and Elizabeth Dalloway.

Clarissa Dalloway tried to overcome her hatred for Miss Kilman by thinking in Kilman's shoes. She realized that her contempt and hostility were not for Miss Kilman herself but only for her improper ideas. Initially, Clarissa hated Miss Kilman, for she believed that Miss Kilman was against patriarchy but tried to control people like men, suppressing other people's individuality. She regarded Miss Kilman as "spectres who [stood] astride us and [sucked] up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants" (Woolf, 2010, p. 8) and, thus, "she would have loved Miss Kilman [but] not in this world" (Woolf, 2010, p. 8). However, when Clarissa started to see her enemy in Kilman's shoes, she realized that "[...] it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered into itself a great deal that was not Miss Kilman" (Woolf, 2010, p. 8). Apart from those dominant ideas, Miss Kilman herself was forthright and brave. Clarissa's homosexual desires were suppressed and prisoned by social norms, while Miss Kilman bravely showed her love to Elizabeth in public: "[If] she could make her hers absolutely and forever and then die; that was all she wanted" (Woolf, 2010, p. 81). Indeed, Clarissa appreciated Miss Kilman. "Ah, how she hated her -- hot, hypocritical, corrupt; with all that power [...] She hated her: she loved her." (Woolf, 2010, p. 107) The semicolon separating "she hated her" from "she loved her" indicates equivalence between love and hatred. Miss Kilman is contradictory, and so is Clarissa's feeling for her. Through understanding Miss Kilman, Clarissa made clear her contradictory feelings: Miss Kilman's idea of control was bad, but the brave woman deserved admiration.

Secondly, Miss Kilman, lacking the ability to feel empathy, had been trapped by her contempt and hatred towards the rich, thus being tortured by suffering. As it is shown in Miss Kilman's consciousness, she considered herself "poor, moreover; degradingly poor". The word "degradingly" indicates a strong sense of shame, illustrating Kilman's hatred even towards her own background. This strong refusal to reconcile with her sense of inferiority further generated her contempt for the rich. She took jobs from the Dalloways but showed great hostility towards Mrs. Dalloway: "Fool! Simpleton! You who have known neither sorrow nor pleasure; who have trifled your life away" (Woolf, 2010, p. 77). Miss Kilman believed that Mrs. Dalloway's kindness was merely a hypocritical mask and that she "had been merely condescending" (Woolf, 2010, p. 76). "And there rose in her an overmastering desire to overcome her; to unmask her." "So she glared; so she glowered", Miss Kilman sought to "[...] make [Mrs. Dalloway] weep; [...] ruin her; humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying" (Woolf, 2010, p. 77). Deeply swallowed by the idea that "[...] she had never been happy, what with being so clumsy and so poor" (Woolf, 2010, p. 76), Miss Kilman refused to treat others with empathy and decided not to "make herself agreeable" (Woolf, 2010, p. 77).

Elizabeth was so kind and gentle that everyone liked her. Elizabeth had "Chinese eyes in a pale face; an Oriental mystery; was gentle, considerate, still" (Woolf, 2010, p. 75). She felt empathetic towards Miss Kilman and took her advice seriously. "If it was being on committees and giving up hours and hours every day [...] that helped the poor, [...] she would like to go a little further" (Woolf, 2010, p. 83). "She liked people who were ill. [...] And she liked the feeling of people working". It is because of her kindness that "[e]very man fell in love with her" (Woolf, 2010, p. 83). Clarissa appreciated Elizabeth, and Richard "was

proud of his daughter” (Woolf, 2010, p. 119), not only for her beauty but also her characteristics -- “beautiful, very stately, very serene” (Woolf, 2010, p. 83) and “very handsome, very self-possessed” (Woolf, 2010, p. 115). Miss Kilman hated the rich, but she loved Elizabeth because she was never like the contemptuous upper class; she was considerate and kind enough.

The more one practices “Shu”, the more successfully one improves oneself. Elizabeth, born with the ability to be empathetic with others, gained everyone’s appreciation because of her consideration. Clarissa and Miss Kilman were on their way to learning empathy; Clarissa tried to extend herself to those she initially hated and achieved empathy, yet Miss Kilman was trapped by her hostility, unable to accept those she hated. As a result, Clarissa arrived at her perfect self, while Miss Kilman failed.

The Highest Realm of Self-perfection: Love

The theme of *Mrs. Dalloway* is “Love”, finding an echo in “Ren” in Mencius’s proposition. “Love” connects every important event, from Mrs. Dalloway going out to buy flowers in the morning to holding a successful party in the evening. Mrs. Dalloway did everything to make people feel united at the party. The cruel war had destroyed people’s hope and permeated their lives with fear, doubt, and loneliness; the harmonious relationship between man and man and man and the world had gone. Clarissa realized it; she wanted to get the connection rebuilt after the war. She planned to offer a party, a place for unification so that everyone could talk freely and sincerely. In her eyes, holding the party indicated “to combine, to create” (Woolf, 2010, p. 75), through which love could be regained and indifference and estrangement between people would be eliminated. “Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that every one was unreal in one way; much more real in another” (Woolf, 2010, p. 104). They were real in a long-lost harmony, feeling unreal in this state of being, for they had been customized by the alienated after-war life. Guided by the idea of going to Clarissa’s party, unity was finally achieved at the party.

The protagonist Clarissa Dalloway is a representative of those who reach the highest realm of love, which is especially embodied in her transcendence of death. At her evening party, when she got the news that a young man had committed suicide, she was shocked at first, then she felt happy about the young man’s death, for she believed: “Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death” (Woolf, 2010, p. 113). She understood immediately that the young man must be forced into his soul before death. His life turned out to be intolerable, which everyone might have experienced once or many times; few persons chose to die like the young man, yet most people chose to live like she herself. She recalled how she tried to revive herself bit by bit, crouching beside her husband like a bird, after she was attacked in the depths of her heart by an awful fear. She suddenly turned out to be incredibly happy, she was happy because she was alive. “No pleasure could equal, she thought, straightening the chairs, pushing in one book on the shelf, this having done with the triumphs of youth, lost herself in the process of living, to find it, with a shock of delight, as the sun rose, as the day sank” (Woolf, 2010, p. 113). Through the death of the young man, she realized a manner of cherishing life itself, which might always be lost in the dust of a busy life. Now she felt happy that the young man died, because she and all others “went on living” (Woolf, 2010, p. 113), and life itself was the most important.

After a period of contemplation, Clarissa really appreciated Septimus’s death. The death of Septimus made Clarissa see the fullness of life in the past, the emptiness of life in the present, and the prosperity of new life in the future (Wu, 1999, p. 198); to understand, grasp, and dominate one’s life, so that one really

becomes the master of life. With her reborn self, Clarissa decided to return to the party, not with the prime minister, but only with her friends Peter and Sally. “[S]he must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room” (Woolf, 2010, p. 114). It was at this point that Clarissa transcended herself, and after a long wander through the spiritual wilderness, her true self was reborn. Septimus died, but his soul was reborn in Clarissa. She went back to reality and wanted to show her friends her transformation, which was confirmed by the different names she was called – “Mrs. Dalloway” and “Clarissa” at the beginning and end of the novel: “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” (Woolf, 2010, p. 1); “It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was” (Woolf, 2010, p. 119). “Oh, but how surprising! – in the room opposite the old lady stared straight at her!” (Woolf, 2010, p. 114). At this moment, “she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun” (Woolf, 2010, p. 114). She truly grasped the epiphany: universal love is the meaning of the world. We must love everyone in this little room.

Conclusion

Whether in the East or the West, human nature is interconnected. Following a parallel comparative perspective, we can clearly sense this point when we interpret Woolf’s novel *Mrs. Dalloway* with Mencius’s proposition of “Wan Wu”, even as we straddle two different disciplines, philosophy and literature. Mencius’ revelation of the nature of the self, the paths and the highest realm of self-perfection two thousand years ago is profound, illuminating countless people’s understanding of life and the world, while Woolf’s vivid depiction of the self is equally profound and moving, further expanding our insight into life. When East meets West, the light of wisdom becomes brighter and more brilliant.

References

- Briggs, J. (2006). *Virginia Woolf: An inner life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Caughie, P. L. (1991). *Virginia Woolf and postmodernism: Literature in quest and question of itself*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Confucius. (2007). *Textbook: The analects of Confucius*. Xun Qian, (Ed.). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Fleishman, A. (1975). *Virginia Woolf, a critical reading*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.
- Harper, H. (1982). *Between language and silence: The novels of Virginia Woolf*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP.
- Laurence, P. (2013). *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Mencius (2016). *Mencius*. H. Hong, (Ed.). Suzhou: Guwuxuan Publishing House.
- Miller, J. H. (1985). Mrs. Dalloway: Repetition as the raising of the dead. *Critical Essays on Virginia Woolf*. M. Beja, (Ed.). Boston: G. K. Hall & Co.
- The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean*. (2007). G. Wang, (Trans.) Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Woolf, V. (1978). *Mrs. Dalloway*. South Australia: eBooks@Adelaide.
- Woolf, V. (1992). “Preface”, *Orlando*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Woolf, V. (2021). *To the Lighthouse*, Nanjing: Yiling Press.
- Woolf, V. (2010). *The diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 2. A. Olivier Bell & A. McNeillie, (Ed.). London: The Hogarth Press.

- Wu, H. (1999). *Virginia: Moments of Being*. Chengdu: Sichuan People's Publishing House.
- Ye, S. (2020). The Moral Self and the Will to Act: A New Exploration of the Meaning of “Wan Wu Jie Bei Yu Wo” in Mencius Philosophy, *Philosophical Research*, (10), 65-74.
- Zhu, X. (2011). *Commentary on the Four Books*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zhao, Q., & Sun, S. (1999). *The Mencius Annotation*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Zhu, X. (1988). *Zhu Zi Yu Lei*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

The Construction of Orphic Image through Water Imagery in Jean Cocteau's *Orphic Trilogy*

Yuqi Liu, Yeting Shi*, Yixin Zhang, Zongzong Pang

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3200105820@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] This paper focuses on the imagery of water in French director Jean Cocteau's *Orphic Trilogy*. This paper utilizes Gaston Bachelard's philosophical theory of water to examine the concrete, abstract, and transcendent meanings of Orphic image in films. The objective is to discover the image's essence. Cocteau employs the duality of water to infuse poetic spirit and aesthetic character into his filmmaking, imbuing Orphic image with the identity of a spirit medium. This image embodies his narcissistic complex, artistic aesthetics, and life-and-death perspectives.

[Keywords] Jean Cocteau; *Orphic Trilogy*; water; image construction; poetic film

Introduction

French artist Jean Cocteau has significantly contributed to various artistic fields, including literature, painting, and film. As a film director, his distinctive style, which is characterized by vivid, fantastical colors and surrealistic tendencies, garners the deep respect and admiration of New Wave filmmakers. Cocteau directed the *Orphic Trilogy*, also known as the *Poet's Trilogy*, between 1930 and 1960. The trilogy consists of *The Blood of a Poet* (1930), *Orpheus* (1950), and *The Testament of Orpheus* (1960). Cocteau reimagines the tragic hero, poet, and singer Orpheus, deconstructs and reconstructs the myths, and gives this figure of Orpheus new significance by drawing on ancient Greek mythology.

Orpheus is portrayed in Greek mythology as a poet, singer, and a poignant, tragic hero. The portrayal of Orpheus in the three films is multifaceted and extends beyond each central trilogy character. Cocteau "adapts the films to the expression of his own most intimate vision" (Oxenhandler, 1956). The Princess becomes "*Orphée's* Orpheus" (Desilets, 2012) when she performs acts of pleasurable submission in the courtroom of the Underworld, serving as both a wellspring of inspiration and an integral part of Orpheus's image. The "myth of Orpheus evolves into his own myth" (Xi XU, 2010) for Cocteau, incorporating "many elements from his own life" (Taek-Soo HAN, 2012). "Orpheus and Narcissus converge in these films as a synthesis of Cocteau's personal obsessions" (Walker, 2015).

As one of the four fundamental elements upon which dreams depend, according to French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1983, p.4), water is fundamentally and materially a system of poetic fidelity (1983, p.5). Water has "a function of [a] universal mirror" (1983, p.26) and "every mirror is stagnant water" (1983, p.22). However, Cocteau transforms the static mirror into the dynamic element of water, gradually allowing Orpheus to unify with himself through introspection and dream exploration. The trilogy is essentially the director's journey of inner exploration.

This paper aims to analyze the central image of Orpheus based on the element of water in the films. What changes does it undergo throughout the films? Why and how does the director use water to create Orpheus's image? How do these character development techniques affect the films?

*Corresponding author. Email address: shiyt@zju.edu.cn

In the trilogy, the Orphic image exists on three logical levels. The concrete Orphic image corresponds to the protagonist of each of the three films, who rewrites the Orpheus myth and introduces Narcissus myth elements. The abstract Orphic image relates to his identity as a medium, which is influenced by water imagery and other supporting characters. The transcendent Orphic image is presented when Orpheus, who gazes upon the water, is not only a character, but also embodies the director's perspectives on film, art, life, and his own death.

A Concrete Depiction of the Orphic Image: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Myths

In Greek mythology, Orpheus is a mythological figure frequently employed by Western artists. In Virgil's *Georgics* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, his exploits include acquiring the Golden Fleece, rescuing his wife from the Underworld, and being slain by the bacchantes, who are the female devotees of Dionysus. Cocteau recasts the tragic love story of Orpheus and his wife, Eurydice. The accidental death of Eurydice prompted Orpheus to travel through the Underworld to save his beloved. Nonetheless, as he was about to enter the mortal realm, he gave in to the temptation to look back and lost Eurydice forever. Upon his return to Thrace, he spent his days in mourning and was ultimately torn apart by maenads. It has been noted by Shuyuan WAN (1996, p.25) that the intricacy of the myth allows for an infinite number of reinterpretations, as its rich themes encompass love, sectarian conflicts, poetry, and human limitation and limitlessness.

Numerous maidens admired Narcissus for his exquisite beauty, but he remained indifferent. One day, he could not tear himself away from his reflection in the water. It led to him falling into the water and drowning, transforming him into a daffodil flower. Cocteau incorporates the image of Narcissus into his sculpture of Orpheus to reconstruct the myth of Orpheus using water.

The Blood of a Poet is fragmented and cryptic, imbued with symbolism and surreal imagery. The film can be divided into four major sections. The artist begins by painting indoors before entering a mirror or plunging into water. The man eventually reaches a corridor, where he struggles while drawing inspiration from historical events, childhood experiences, mysterious legends, and gender relations. The poet is then

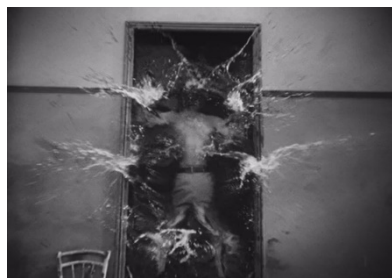


Figure 1. The poet entering the mirror.

led to a symbolic “death” at the end of the corridor via voice-over. The artist ultimately undergoes “death and rebirth” and is transformed into a statue before encountering another demise. As the significant events transpire, water plays a pivotal role in the narrative. When the main character enters the mirror, it is like diving into water. Cocteau describes this scene as the poet “entering a block of ice” (2005, p.179) and refers to the mirror as the “water of Narcissus” (Hammond, 1972, p.27). The director deconstructs the mythic narrative without reassembling it into a coherent story. The film lacks clear temporal and spatial anchors, and its protagonist is an artist and spirit medium who can transform mirrors into water and cross into the mirror world. However, he lacks a distinct identity. Moreover, the director deconstructs the myth's significance by labeling the film as having “no theme” (2005, p.184), and permitting the audience to interpret the visuals according to their thoughts (2005, p.176). In Greek mythology, Orpheus pursued Eurydice to the Underworld, where he ultimately perished and was reunited with her. For Cocteau, water is a dynamic mirror in the film, in which Orpheus seeks immortality through art and experiences a perpetual cycle of death and rebirth.

The director of *Orpheus* states – in a voiceover at the film's beginning - “Legends have the privilege of being ageless; you can interpret them in your own way.” *Orpheus* displays greater maturity in plot

development, dialogue composition, characterization, and the use of cinematic techniques when compared to the silent film *The Blood of a Poet*, which was produced twenty years prior. It has the most coherent storyline, representing Cocteau's initial attempt in the trilogy to deconstruct and reconstruct myths using water and a mirror. Orpheus encounters the Princess and witnesses the magical spectacle of her and her attendants stepping into the mirror; he then passes out next to a pool of water, facing his reflection. This scene is a notable allusion to the myth of Narcissus. Upon Orpheus's first entry into the mirror, it transforms into rippling water. In the film, *La Zone* (the zone) refers to the world behind the mirror inhabited by the deceased, while *eau sale* (dirty water) refers to the "real" world in which Orpheus resides; both the mirror and the water serve as the boundary between the two worlds. Orpheus undergoes a profound transformation due to the mirror: upon discovering its mystic power, he undergoes a dramatic and radical change in temperament, loses interest in his wife, and develops a hopeless infatuation with the Princess. He is captivated by her car radio. Behind the mirror, he and the Princess express their affection for one another. Upon his return, he remains indifferent to his resurrected spouse, and, paradoxically, becomes more smitten with the Princess.



Figure 2. Orpheus at the water's edge.

In *The Testament of Orpheus*, the protagonist throws a torn photograph into the sea, where Cégeste, the man depicted holding a hibiscus that represents the director, resurrects from the water. This event signifies the start of Cocteau's testament. Although there is no physical mirror in the film, the protagonist's observations and reflections on his journey reflect his inner world, and the entire set allows him to "stare at his own reflection in the water."

In addition, the myths are interconnected: Narcissus loses his life due to his self-love, whereas Orpheus enters the Underworld twice for Eurydice. Moreover, the director's creative process reflects the narcissistic tendency. He created the trilogy's handwritten scripts, paintings, and voiceovers. At the start of *The Blood of a Poet*, Cocteau extends a hand as if to welcome the audience into the movie. *Orpheus* subtly alludes to his life experiences, and his voice resonates through the car's radio. The director portrays the main character in *The Testament of Orpheus*. He can only sketch a self-portrait while attempting to draw a hibiscus flower. Cégeste conveys, "Don't be stubborn, a painter always creates his self-portrait." While wandering around, the director encounters another version of himself. These examples demonstrate how the images of Cocteau and Orpheus gradually converge throughout the films. Over time, Orpheus transforms from a young poet who resembles the director in *The Blood of a Poet* to a renowned and "unfaithful" poet in *Orpheus*, and finally to the director himself in *The Testament of Orpheus* (Walker, 2015, p.9).

Abstract Depiction of the Orphic Image: Metaphors in Water Imagery and in the Images of Supporting Characters

Within the trilogy, Orpheus assumes two abstract identities: a passionate creator and a life-and-death-transcending medium. In general, Orpheus's fervor as a creator, and his spiritual power as a medium continue to grow. The interaction between dynamic water and static water (represented by mirrors) significantly contributes to the formation of his identity, and the exploration of its significance is a necessary step from concrete characterization to the author's conception.

Still water is a mirror. Bachelard claims that the reflections are an oneiric invitation (1983, p.48), and a mirror "is too obviously a dream device" (1983, p.21). Additionally, he suggests, "Poetic experience must

remain dependent on oneiric experience” and that “dreams need to be engraved deeply into nature.” Thus, “A poet who begins with a mirror must end with the water of a fountain if he wants to present a complete poetic experience” (1983, p.22). It coincides with Cocteau’s depiction of the poetic state, which the director has figuratively described as “dozing, but not asleep... with some unions (of devils) immediately appearing in their hearts” (Cocteau, 2005). This “ultimate visual poem” (2005, p.244) in *The Testament of Orpheus* borrows from the “mechanism of dreams” to allow “numerous individuals to experience the same dream together” (2005, p.268). Water is “a sort of plastic mediator between life and death” (Bachelard, 1983, p.12), and the dividing line between reality and fantasy. In Cocteau’s works, death is simply the other side of life; it is not horrifying but rather distanced from our reality. The poet continues to serve as an intermediary between the realms of life and death. As a medium, the poet traverses water and mirrors, freely traveling between life and death, and between time and space — “a helpless talent of the poet and a relentless call of poetry” (Nuo LI, 2021). “A pool contains a universe; a fragment of a dream contains an entire soul” (1983, p.50). As the trilogy unfolds, the poet’s psychic power grows stronger, and the world in the mirrors steadily widens.

The statue that comes to life in the first film compels the artist to enter the world of the mirror. Before stepping into the mirror, the poet cautiously and hesitantly touches its surface, then dives into it, creating splashes. This action leads him down a long corridor. The act of “passing through the mirror” represents a profound transition from one space to another and a method of self-exploration (Bing JUN & Lanlan SHAO, 2018), with the mirror serving as a gateway to the poet’s inner self.



Figure 3. Orpheus entering the mirror.

The protagonist of the second film, Orpheus, gains the ability to traverse mirrors by wearing gloves. After Orpheus’s death, he can enter *La Zone* without his gloves, which represents protection, given that traversing mirrors can be perilous even for the poet. Cocteau selects toxic mercury for a close-up of Orpheus entering the mirror. Immersing his hands in the poisonous liquid, the actor becomes the character. His life would be in danger without gloves (Walker, 2015). The space behind the mirror is even larger and more enigmatic than the corridor, and for the first time, the director connects it to the realm of the dead. Heurtebise says to Orpheus, “I unveil to you the ultimate secret: mirrors are the doors through which Death comes and goes. You remain gazing at yourself on a mirror all your life, and you will see Death working like bees in a hive of glass.” When we observe ourselves in the mirror, we begin to understand the passage of time and our approach to the Underworld. Orpheus’s gaze in the mirror changes from one of fear and curiosity to one of resolute determination. He recognizes the essence of life, overcomes his fear of death, and courageously approaches the mirror. At the conclusion of the film, the Princess sends Orpheus back to the mortal world, and Heurtebise retrieves his gloves, preventing him from entering the mirror. As he loses his identity as a medium, the man who is ostensibly the protagonist of *Orpheus* is no longer Orpheus.

In the final film, a professor devoted to studying spatiotemporal dynamics is portrayed as the poet Orpheus’s assistant. The main character receives from the scientist a bullet that is ingeniously designed to return him to the correct juncture and space. Astonishingly, Orpheus implores the professor to figuratively “kill” him by emitting this bullet, thereby achieving a profound alteration in his fate. Following this transformation, the protagonist can traverse time and space without gloves or mirrors. The director strategically incorporates many experimental apparatus into the *mise-en-scène* (placing on stage),

underscoring the professor's identity as a scientist and emphasizing the scientific basis of "immortality and rebirth." The professor's pivotal assistance restores the lost poet to his journey within his space-time continuum, resulting in the poet's rebirth and the beginning of his exploration in the unknown world (Cen CHEN, 2019). In a fascinating temporal twist, the 18th-century Cocteau undergoes a figurative "death" only to reappear in a form that more closely resembles his actual identity — that of Cocteau in 1959. As this reincarnated Cocteau contemplates his beauty, "the world becomes an immense Narcissus in the act of thinking about himself" (Bachelard, 1983). Cocteau's observations and experiences throughout his odyssey are inextricably linked to himself. Objects and events in the world reappear in his thoughts, indicating a resurgence of the poet's psychic powers.

A Transcendent Depiction of Orphic Image: Self-identification and Self-expression

The Poet who Directed and Starred in his Own Films

The medium Orpheus gradually transforms into an incarnation of the director. The creation of the Orphic image symbolizes his journey of self-discovery, self-identification, and self-exploration. The Orphic image gradually progresses towards conceptualization throughout the trilogy, encapsulating the underlying logic of transformation between its tangible and abstract dimensions.

Cocteau has stated: "It seems to me nearly the whole of (my) work can be read as indirect spiritual autobiography" (Cocteau, 1964). He admitted that the identity of a public figure left him uncertain about his true self, a confession that contains a narcissistic revelation. In a letter, Cocteau explained that *Orpheus* is "much less a film than it is myself – a kind of projection of things that are important to me" (Evans, 1977). The director frequently incorporates his works of art, manuscripts, poetry, and even his voice into his films. The image he admires is his own, and he narcissistically identifies with Orpheus by focusing on his own art, body, and life. Cocteau incorporates the narcissistic complex into the process of self-exploration through which he creates his artworks by employing the metaphor of Narcissus's reflection at the water's edge. The trilogy's plots and themes are intricately interwoven with Cocteau's real life, symbolizing his artistic concepts, social relationships, and introspection. The involvement of the director in these films increases over time. He rewrites myths skillfully, immortalizing them as his "personal myths." "A being confident of its beauty has a tendency to pancalism. Little by little, beauty is enframed. It spreads from Narcissus to the world" (Bachelard, 1983). It is imperative not to limit the interpretation of Cocteau's narcissistic complex. Orpheus perceives something lacking in everyday life. What he truly desires is his soul's fiancée, and various forms of art and spiritual practices will more accurately satisfy his fundamental needs (Colonna, 2019). Cocteau's fixation on his reflection in the water, coupled with his exhaustive exploration of his allure, inspires a relentless pursuit of artistic and poetic beauty. He is considered an all-around artist because he sees no boundaries between different art forms. His films are consistently inspired by his poems, books, or paintings (Siambani, Patricia, 2010). His works combine the modern and the ancient, where "classicism and modernity stand as both their paradox and hallmark" (Patouet, 2022). In his eyes, "a movie is an ink of light" (1989, p.9), akin to writing and painting and carries the essence of poetry. As someone who identifies primarily as a poet, he adores the term "poetry" and labels all his works as poetry. With relatively simple cinematic techniques, "he stands as the first and central proponent for the poetic image in cinema" (Schrader, 2015).

The cinematic narrative structure, dialogues, and cinematography in the Orphic trilogy transcend conventions and converge with the concise and abstract expression of poetry. "My aim is not to make a

film, but to shoot a poem” (Evans, 1977, p.185), Cocteau asserted. Poetry, as the essence of language, can transcend space and time, thereby blurring the line between reality and fiction. Cocteau liberates the poet’s profound philosophical reflections by constructing a new space-time structure using montage and cinematic techniques.

“Water is a complete poetic reality.” “A poetics of water, despite the variety of ways in which it is presented to our eyes, is bound to have unity” (Bachelard, 1983). The fragmentary form of poetry corresponds structurally to the non-narrative structure of the trilogy (Yingying XU & Fang WANG, 2018), which relies on water and mirrors to obscure chronological orders. The world behind the mirror in *The Blood of a Poet* unfolds like a ribbon across the screen. Water and mirrors intertwine time and space in *Orpheus*: the poet who resurrects from a mirror, his wife who enters the mirror world after her death, and the desolate Underworld behind a mirror. In *The Testament of Orpheus*, the absence of a physical “mirror” transforms the world into a reflection of the poet. Focusing on expressing dreams and the inner realms, the director departs from conventional narrative logic. The first film’s four rooms behind a mirror depict scenes of war, opium smoking, a girl being reprimanded, and a hermaphrodite, all of which should have occurred in different eras and locations. In the second film, deceased individuals from different eras gather behind the mirror, each carrying out their activities. In the final film, Cocteau, as a time traveler, meets a scientist at four different stages of his life. Dimensions of time and space are disrupted. The realm of mirrors, which corresponds to the realm of water, serves as a symbol of transcendence in space and time and combines diverse images from distinct spatial areas, superimposing the director’s feelings and philosophical musings. The director combines disparate spaces by spatial juxtaposition, enriching the film’s content and imbuing it with the essence of poetry.

The Master of his Life and Death

Heraclitus asserted that all things are in a constant flux. “Water passes like the days” and “death is in it” (Bachelard, 1983). “Water is the real material mainstay of death” (1983, p.64). “The water in its youthful limpidity is a reversed sky, where the stars take on new life” (1983, p.47). Water has a maternal quality; it is the source of life. “Every poetics must accept components of material essence” (1983, p.3). This component of the *Poet’s Trilogy* is water. For Edgar Allan Poe, “a life is described through death” (1983, p.46). Similarly, Cocteau perceives death and life as equally dynamic states; life and death are not merely parallel or contradictory; their coexistence demonstrates the duality of reality, which resides in the duality of water (Nuo LI, 2021). *Orpheus* draws inspiration for his poetry from his “death and resurrection.” The main character of *The Blood of a Poet* explores his creative path in the mirror world. The mortal Orpheus falls in love with the princess of the Underworld, whereas Heurtebise, the “angel” of the Underworld, falls in love with the mortal Eurydice. “Life” and “death” are mutually attracted. Orpheus undergoes a profound transformation after returning from La Zone. When the bacchantes threaten him, he confronts death with the boldness of a poet. Cocteau and the hibiscus, a symbol of himself, are “immortalized” through “death and rebirth” in *The Testament of Orpheus*. Cocteau’s preoccupation with death and rebirth is intricately intertwined with his life experience, including the early loss of his father and his beloved and his intermittent recovery from drug addiction. “I have passed through times so intolerable that death has seemed to me a delicious thing, so I have formed the habit of not fearing her (death) and of looking at her straight in the face” (Cocteau, 2013). The poet perpetually feigns death only to be reborn, utilizing this process to be immortal. Life and death are transformed into instruments for a poet’s rebirth. Orpheus, the medium, travels

between death and rebirth, between reality and dreams, to remember his love and seek the essence of life (Yingying XU & Fang WANG, 2018).

In the *Poet's Trilogy*, Orpheus's journey concludes with his death and rebirth. Like Orpheus, Jean Cocteau must cross the border of water, enter the Underworld, and confront death. Like Narcissus, he must dive into the pool to find death. The Charon complex and the Ophelia complex "both symbolize a meditation on our last voyage and on our final dissolution" (1983, p.12). However, "for some profound dreamers", death "will still be the first true trip" (1983, p.73). Cocteau views death as a beginning rather than an end; he continues to pursue eternity through death. In the screenplay for *Orpheus*, Cocteau refers to the princess as *La Mort* (Death), but during filming, he uses *Ma Mort* (My Death) (Hammond, p.31). Cocteau recognizes that death is a personal experience; the poet's demise is his. Orpheus's affection for death suggests he has a narcissistic complex. In *The Testament of Orpheus*, Cégeste asks Cocteau, "Aren't you an expert in *Phoenixology* (the science that allows one to die many times in order to be reborn)?" Cocteau, like the phoenix in the film, has experienced numerous deaths and rebirths. He desires not a simple death but rather a rebirth after death. He realizes gradually that the film is a vehicle for poetry and a means to immortality. He transcends life and death with his camera and poetry, attaining eternity in his cinematic poem and achieving poetic immortality.

Conclusion

Water represents both life and death, acting as a barrier between reality and dreams. It is the instrument Orpheus uses to observe his reflection, the source of his spiritual power and poetic talent, and the limit of his journey from life to death. The director integrates his narcissistic complex, artistic aesthetic, and perspective on life and death into the image of Orpheus by utilizing the duality of water. Throughout the trilogy, Cocteau gradually merges with the character of Orpheus, akin to Narcissus, by immersing himself in water. In a continuous cycle of death and rebirth, he gradually approaches his true self. This convergence allows him to capture both "conscious and unconscious" inspiration, allowing him to compose immortal poetry. Cocteau demonstrates that film can be a fantastic medium for poetry. The revolving film reels resemble the composition of poetry and the flow of a river. The essence of Jean Cocteau's cinematic poetics is substituting the composition of language with the poetic arrangement of actions – the narrative of images over the narrative of words. This essence provides the Ninth Art with perpetual inspiration.

References

- Bachelard, G. (1983). *Water and dreams: An essay on the imagination of matter*, (pp. 4-91). Translated from French by Edith R. Farrell, Dallas: The Pegasus Foundation.
- Bing, J., & Lanlan, S. (2018). Jean Cocteau's poet's trilogy and his poetic explorations. *Journal of Chinese Culture*, 1(1), 112-119.
- Cen, C. (2019). The aesthetics of metaphor in *The Testament of Orpheus* of Jean Cocteau. *Appreciation*, 9(1), 65-66.
- Cocteau, J. (1930). *The blood of a poet*. France, Vicomte Charles de Noaille (Le Sang d'un poète, France, Vicomte Charles de Noaille).
- Cocteau, J. (1950). *Orpheus*. France, André Paulvé Films (Orphée, France, Les Films André Paulvé).
- Cocteau, J. (1960) *The testament of Orpheus*. France, The Cinematographic Editions (Le Testament d'Orphée, France, Les Éditions Cinégraphiques).

- Cocteau, J. (1964). *The art of fiction No. 34*. The Paris Review, Retrieved from <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4485/the-art-of-fiction-no-34-jean-cocteau>
- Cocteau, J. (1989). *An ink of light*, (p. 9). Montpellier: Paul-Valéry University. (Une encre de lumière, Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry).
- Cocteau, J. (2013). *The difficulty of being*, (p. 84). Translated from French by Elizabeth Sprigge, London: London Melville House Publishing.
- Cocteau, J. (2013). *About cinematography*, (pp. 176-268). Translated from French by Xiaoshan ZHOU, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press.
- Colonna, M. L. (2019). Apollon, Orphée et les dauphins. Deux visages du masculin. *Cahiers Jungiens de Psychanalyse*, 149(1), 93-108.
- Desilets S. (2012). Cocteau's female Orpheus. *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 40(4), 288-300.
- Evans, A. B. (1977). *Jean Cocteau and his films of Orphic identity*, (pp. 105-185). Cranbury: Association of University Presses.
- Hammond, R. M. (1972). The mysteries of Cocteau's "Orpheus". *Cinema Journal*, 11(2), 26-33.
- Nuo, L. (2021). The voice and the poetry of theatre: Jean Cocteau's La Voix humaine. *French and Francophone Studies*, 4(1), 54-63.
- Oxenhandler, N. (1956). Poetry in three films of Jean Cocteau. *Yale French Studies*, 17(1), 14-20.
- Patouet, J. (2022). Jean Cocteau, du Symbolique au Symbolisme. *L'en-je Lacanien*, 38(1), 61-75.
- Schrader, P. (2015). Slow fast, and reverse motion. *Film Comment*, 51(4), 52-55.
- Shuyuan, W. (1996). The reconstruction and dissolution of Orpheus. *Hundred Schools in Arts*, 3(1), 24-32.
- Siambani, E. V. K., & Patricia, L. T. (2010). Jean Cocteau, from The Blood of a Poet (1930) to the Villa Santo-Sospir (1952). *Ligeia*, 97(100), 96-110. (Jean Cocteau, du Sang d'un poète (1930) à La Villa Santo-Sospir (1952)).
- Taek-soo, H. (2012). The poet's eye and the camera's eye. *Studies of French Culture and Arts in France*, 41(1), 203-229.
- Walker, G. E. (2015). *Jean Cocteau: Orpheus Narcissus*, (pp. vii-56). Md.: Louisiana State University.
- Xi, X. (2010). Rewriting the myth of Orpheus - Jean Cocteau and his poetry of cinema. *French Studies*, 1(1), 36-42, 82.
- Yingying, X., & Fang, W. (2018). An exploration of Jean Cocteau's cinematic texts. *Movie Review*, 9(1), 75-77.

The Ultimate Futility of the Bonfire of Reform and the Development of Ethical Sensibility in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Earth's Holocaust*

Shuangning Lyu, Gexin Yang*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: Sharlene020108@163.com

[Abstract] This essay explores the development of the narrator's ethical sensibility, the ethical choices made by the reformers, and the allusions to the ultimate futility of social reforms that pursue moral perfections through human intellect in *Earth's Holocaust* from the perspective of ethical literary criticism. Initially advocating for radical reform, the narrator, embodying Hawthorne as an observer of the bonfire, gradually came to realize that the burnt sacrifice was superficial and incapable of purifying the human heart. The attempts at reform are ultimately futile, leading the narrator to become a critic of such universal appeals for reform. The bonfire also allows self-interested performers to conceal their past mistakes and alleviate their own suffering, deviating from the original purpose of reform and innovation. Therefore, Hawthorne used *Earth's Holocaust* as a satirical allegory to warn his contemporaries to approach innovative attempts with caution while considering the complexity of social reform. Aligned with Christian beliefs, Hawthorne presented his view on humankind's eternal futility in achieving perfect reform since it is impossible to purify our hearts due to original sin.

[Keywords] Nathaniel Hawthorne; *Earth's Holocaust*; final futility; original sin; ethical sensibility; ethical choices

Introduction

Earth's Holocaust is an allegory by 19th-century American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne. The story was first published in 1844 and later included in *Mosses from an Old Manse*. The inclusion of the story bears satirical intent and deals with human folly (Doubleday, 1942, p. 325). The story depicts a group of reformers, unsatisfied with their world that has been "overburdened with an accumulation of worn-out trumpery" (Hawthorne, 1844, p.326), or the sins of the past, deciding to rid themselves of it through a general bonfire. The narrator, "I," participated in this bonfire of reform as a bystander, witnessing the burning ceremony from the beginning to the end. Finally, the narrator realized that such a burnt sacrifice would accomplish nothing, since the root of sins, namely the human heart, had remained unburnt, thus unpurified. Skepticism towards social reform during Hawthorne's time and a yearning for the past are prominent themes throughout *Earth's Holocaust*; these ideas constitute fundamental aspects of Romanticism.

The satirical tone toward social reform, and the concept of "original sin" in the concluding pages endow *Earth's Holocaust* with multifaceted interpretations that establish connections for the story with both religious contexts and contemporary references. Sharnhorst (1980) delves into the story through the lens of the influence exerted by the Millerites on literature. He argued that Hawthorne was inspired by the Millerite movement in pondering "how reforming zeal might bring to destruction all the age-old abuses and encumbrances of the world." The conclusion of the earth's inhabitants' vain attempt to dismantle the "worn-out trumpery (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 326)" resonates with the rather pessimistic prophecy of *The Day of Doom of Millerism* (Sharnhorst, 1980, p. 23). Walsh (2009), on the other hand, casts a broader interpretation, positioning the story in a biblical context, indicating that the structure of the story is analogous to the story

*Corresponding author. Email address: ygx80080@163.com.

of the city of Jericho in the *Book of Joshua*, and the moral of the story is evocative of Psalm 51. Meanwhile, the central idea of *Earth's Holocaust*, the burnt sacrifice, aligns with the pyres in the works of Homer and the burnt offerings in the *Old Testament*. The story, therefore, aims to reveal that “humankind’s inherent incapacity to transcend the imperfections independent of God is further underscored” (Walsh, 2009, p. 122).

The interplay between *Earth's Holocaust* and the realm of social reforms lends the story its contextual relevance. Kopley (2018) discovered that the story is an elaboration of Hawthorne’s idea of “a bonfire to be made of the gallows and all symbols of evil.” Doubleday (1941) highlights that the narrative’s satirical tone is targeted at the New England reformers during Hawthorne’s time. She further asserts that Hawthorne firmly believed that “New England remains inextricably tied to its historical legacy, and humankind’s freedom to either accept or reject the past is merely naïve delusion” (Doubleday, 1941, p. 643). In a parallel vein, Doubleday (1942) also notices that the symbol of the “Titan of Innovation” (p. 341) in the story serves as Hawthorne’s criticism of the attitudes toward society of his time, which is characterized by an overlooking of the human heart and meanwhile, the heart has not been “innovated.” In this respect, the story penetrates Hawthorne’s insight into the “demonism of reformatory schemers”; that the schemers have forgotten the very center of reform, the human heart (Doubleday, 1942, p. 336). Turner (1942) shares similar ideas but interprets them from a vantage point that casts Hawthorne as an observer of the reform: together with Hawthorne’s pervasive moral philosophy, the universality of sin, *Earth's Holocaust* suggests that “the evil resulting from any reform accomplished balances the good, and humankind’s efforts yield no substantial advancement” (Turner, 1942, p.705).

Despite the aforementioned theories and perspectives, a lack of interpretation of the ethical sensibility of the narrator can be noticed, i.e. how did Hawthorne allude to the final futility of the bonfire through the narrator’s observation and the development of his ethical sensibility? Therefore, building upon the author’s skeptical tone toward social reform and humankind’s inability to eradicate imperfections in *Earth's Holocaust* as foundational premises, this paper tries to answer these questions by analyzing the process of the bonfire and Hawthorne’s ethical orientation from the perspective of ethical literary criticism.

The Evolvement of the Ethical Sensibility of the Narrator “I”

As a critical theory for analyzing and interpreting the ethical nature of literary works, ethical literary criticism views literature as a product of morality and emphasizes its function for moral teaching. The theory scrutinizes literature as “a unique expression of ethics and morality within a certain historical period” (Nie, 2010, p. 14), implying that literature in essence is an art of ethics. The complexity of a literary text is determined by the number of ethical knots, lines, and taboos it incorporates (Nie, 2021, p.190). Thus, since literature is the art of ethics within the domain of ethical literary criticism, and literary characters are integral in either uniting or untying ethical knots, the characters bear ethical sensibility deserving of analysis. Meanwhile, the ethical sensibility of literary characters can be understood as the set of ethical values, principles, and beliefs represented through their language, behavior, and actions. Therefore, in *Earth's Holocaust*, evaluating the narrator’s evolving ethical sensibility while witnessing that the bonfire is necessary, as his shifting attitude which illustrates his final maturity reflects Hawthorne’s skeptical tone on surface-level innovations.

The ceremony of the bonfire is recounted by a first-person narrator “I,” whose identity is revealed by his remark on the burning of books – “It is no lack of modesty to mention my works which contributed a glimmering spark or two to the splendor of the evening” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 339). Therefore, the narrator can be regarded as a writer who perceives his works as of meager importance. In other words, he is a modest

and naïve version of Hawthorne, illustrating Hawthorne's omnipresence in the story. The narrator's evolution of ethical sensibility on the burning ceremony progresses in parallel to the articles being burned. While the articles begin with the representations of monarchy, political power, wars, and punishments, evolving into the carriers of humankind's philosophy, wisdom, and Christianity, the narrator transforms from a supporter of the bonfire of reform to ultimately a critic.

Hawthorne depicts the narrator as a bystander to the bonfire who believes that the world is governed by moral laws. His aim of coming to see the burnt sacrifice is to discover "*some profundity of moral truth heretofore hidden in mist or darkness*" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 326). The tone of "seeking profundity of moral truth" illustrates that the narrator's attitude toward the ceremony is curious and full of expectations; he is "*desirous of knowing the whole process of the affair from beginning to end*" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 326). Therefore, the narrator is a naïve and pure supporter of the bonfire in the initial stage. He is willing to see "the rubbish of the herald's office," the representations of royalty that are "condemned as useless baubles," the liquors that have become "the curse of ages," old implements of cruelty that symbolize "the long and deadly error of human law," etc., being burned. His supportive attitude is reflected by his belief in the power of "Reason and Philanthropy (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 334)" to replace the war, his exclamation of "That was well done" when seeing punishing instruments of death turn to ash, and his confidence in the chances endowed by the "great Book of Time" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 339) to new generations of writers with the disappearance of past wisdom. In short, the narrator is not as radical and aggressive as the reformers who are determined to burn "*articles that were judged fit for nothing but to be burned*" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 326), and also not as grieving and sorrowful as admirers of the past who "*gaze at the ruin of what was dearest to their eyes with grief and wonder*" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 327). He believes in the reform sincerely.

On the other hand, the narrator's satirical opinions toward the burnt sacrifice gradually unfold through his remarks and conversations with other observers as the ceremony progresses, indicating the development of his ethical sensibility regarding the sacrifice. The narrator becomes suspicious of the reform, questions the bonfire's influence, realizes its futility and ultimately refuses to support the actions. During the early stage of burning, specifically from "the rubbish of the herald's office" to "the weapons and munitions of war," the narrator remains calm in recording the scene, commenting on the blaze these things have ignited. However, the comments from other observers have already hinted at his final conversion. The disregard of the herald's "rubbish" triggered grief at the prospect that the abolishment of majestic distinctions of rank would lead to "*society's loss of grace and steadfastness*" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 328). Furthermore, the giving up of all liquors brings anxiety that many people "*deemed that human life would be gloomier than ever*" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 330) when the gigantic spire of the blaze sinks. The burning of artillery fails to eradicate the war for a veteran commander, as "the necessity of war lies far deeper" and the battlefield is "*the only court for the settlement of national difficulties*" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 334). Thus, we can discover that during this period, the narrator discerns the superficiality and limitations of the sacrifice. These past articles have been created by humankind's desires and are actual manifestations of human sins. The only article that cannot be burned is the human heart. The narrator's discovery reveals that the bonfire might not present the "profundity" of moral truth; instead, the truth lies deeper, in a more abstract manner. Whether the burning of physical representations of past errors can lead to real moral improvement remains questionable.

When the ceremony reaches the burning of "the weight of dead men's thought" (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 337), the ceremony is in form physical and in truth spiritual. In this stage, the narrator's remarks on the blazes and the books reflect his stronger skepticism of the bonfire. Milton's works send up "*a powerful*

blaze” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 337), and from Shakespeare, there gushed “*a flame of marvelous splendor that shades over the sun’s meridian glory*” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 337), and that the narrator believes that Shakespeare “still blazes fervidly as ever” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 338). Unlike reformers who have ignored the contents of the books, deeming them useless articles worthy only of being destroyed to enliven the scene and ignite another blaze, the narrator acknowledges the value of “dead men’s thoughts” and mourns for their loss. He perceives beyond the physical appearance of the books and cherishes their content. During this period, the bonfire not only exposes its superficiality but also its extremity and ignorance: things that are regarded as from the past should be burned.

And while the earth has already been “*freed from the plague of letters*” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 340), the narrator finds that the reform will fail to progress any further unless people “*set fire to the earth itself*” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 340),” as the physical representations of human errors, sins and wisdom have all been eradicated. However, the reform, in its aggressive manner, remains relentless and reaches the externals of religion. This signifies that the ceremony transcends physical representations of power, and wisdom, and reaches the human heart. This period of the narrator’s developing ethical sensibility is closely connected with religious symbols. Although the narrator finds solace in believing his faith will become more sublime in its simplicity with the loss of all the drapery, he is struck by the fact that “the Titan of innovation,” or the actions of reform, being an angel or a fiend in his nature, has “*laid his terrible hand upon the main pillars which supported the whole edifice of human’s moral and spiritual state*” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 342). The mighty wind of earth’s angry lamentation and the “dazzling whiteness” of the Holy Scriptures that survives the flames remind the narrator that “*not a truth is destroyed nor buried so deep among the ashes but it will be raked up at last*” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 342), indicating that the bonfire, which seems to leave human “heaps of embers and ashes” another morning, changes nothing, for the burnt sacrifices stay on the surface. The world of tomorrow will once again enrich itself with what has been cast off by the world of today. The narrator, therefore, instead of praising the significance of human workmanship and mightiness of reform, admits the futility of the bonfire.

In the end, the narrator acknowledges the futility of such a blunt reform. Consequently, the narrator reaches his conclusion that as the very root of human error, namely the human heart, cannot be cast into the bonfire, humankind’s age-long endeavor for perfection would have served “*only to render him the mockery of the evil principle*” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 344). In portraying the character of the narrator, Hawthorne merely allows the narrator to be an observer engaged in the entire process of excavating the profound truth and essence of the bonfire of reform but endows him with blank space to develop his ethical sensibility on social reform. The narrator begins with pure expectations, discovers the limitations of burning the physical appearance of things, and ultimately realizes that the moral truth lies in the human heart, which bears the original sin and cannot be burned, thus changing the ceremony into total futility. This final epiphany reflects the narrator’s maturity, and while his praise and criticism of the reform intertwine during the burnt sacrifice, his initial expectations become a satire of humankind’s futile attempts to reform society by merely defining the material representations of the past as evil. The narrator finds that the earth’s holocaust of “*the feeble instrument to discern and rectify what is wrong*” (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 344) will only render an insubstantial dream as it cannot purify the human heart wherein “the original wrong” resides. In conclusion, in *Earth’s Holocaust*, Hawthorne reaches his satire of the reform of his era by establishing the narrator’s evolving ethical sensibility and the narrator’s maturity in seeing through the truth of the burnt sacrifice.

The Reformers' Choices as the Allusion to the Final Futility

From one perspective, Hawthorne expressed his criticism of contemporary reform by examining the development of the narrator's ethical sensibility. As mentioned above, the narrator's final epiphany results from his observations and those of the bystanders. This reflects that the articles and actions being observed convey Hawthorne's satirical tone to the bonfire of reform as well. Thus, the actions of the bonfire's participants, as recorded by the narrator, have already alluded to the bonfire's futility with the reformers' ethical choices in burning their specific articles to satisfy their personal desires.

Within the domain of ethical literary criticism, while human intelligence is acquired through natural selection, ethical choices play a crucial role in elevating humankind from a state of bestiality and bestowing reason upon humans. The entirety of human history, therefore, evolves through the interplay of natural and ethical selections (Nie, 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, since literature serves as an art of ethics within a specific historical period, literary works should not be exclusively read and analyzed within the current ethical environment and context, or it will lead to an ethical paradox in literary analysis. Therefore, ethical literary criticism focuses on analyzing how literature represents ethical and moral phenomena in the real world in a particular historical era within a fictional world. It seeks to explore and interpret literary works' ethical values and moral responsibility. The theory also attempts to elucidate the role of literature in promoting human ethical choices, social morality, and moral education (Nie, 2014, p. 100). In *Earth's Holocaust*, thereupon, Hawthorne tried to interpret humankind's inherent error in using major social events, in this case, a bonfire of reform, to fulfill their own desires and avoid troubles. This representation of human selfishness also foreshadows the ultimate failure of the ceremony.

Human selfishness primarily manifests itself in the individual contributions to the memorable bonfire. The narrator describes these contributions as having "very amusing characters." The bonfire is intended to eradicate human errors, leading to the burning of tangible evidence of human sins and acts of concealment. It has been recorded that a poor fellow throws in his "*empty purse and a bundle of counterfeit or insolvable bank notes*," "*discarded maids or bachelors and couples mutually weary of one another tossed bundles of perfumed letters and enamored sonnets in the fire*," a widow who "*resolves on a second marriage*" throws in her dead husband's miniature, etc. (Hawthorne, 1844, pp. 331-332). Concerning these contributions, the bonfire, rather satirically, is compelled to make the ethical choice of accommodating the evil nature of human nature rather than adhering to its original aim of innovating and burning for the good. These so-called "reformers" may detach from their pasts, but the detachment is not for the "universal good." Instead, they turn to their own privileges, the sins, and past errors still linger in their memory and hearts, destined to resurface in the future. Such desires have gone further in demanding the destruction of all written constitutions to "*free the consummated world as the man first created*." In other words, humankind would no longer have constraints in regulating their actions, as the deterrents introduced by human efforts would vanish.

Another group of "amusing contributions" views the bonfire not as a tool for "covering up the sins," but as a means of "forgetting" to alleviate their pains. For instance, an apothecary who is discarded by his era, namely ruined by the spread of homeopathy, throws in his whole stocks of drugs and medicines. Similarly, a gentleman of the old school gives up his code of manners, which had been formerly written down for the benefit of the next generation. An American author who has been neglected by the public discards his pen and paper and seeks out a less discouraging occupation, and so on (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 332). These "reformers" make the ethical choice to employ the bonfire to forget their past times and look

forward to a new future, although not for the cause of social reform. Their regret and grief lie deep in their hearts and cannot be innovated.

Therefore, within the solemn ceremony of the bonfire of reform, the differences in humankind's ethical choices have alluded to the final futility of the burning: while the majority believes the burning of all the rubbish can liberate the earth from the past sins, the sins of concealing personal errors and forgetting personal pains have penetrated the sublime goal. The former burns for the selfless and universal good, while the latter is for the selfish and private benefits.

Skeptical Tone toward Social Reform from Hawthorne

The narrator's epiphany in realizing the futility of the burnt reform and the reformers' ethical choices of burning for personal privileges both reflect Hawthorne's attitude toward an aggressive universal reform. This attitude resonates with Hawthorne's preoccupation with the theme of intellectual pride in his generation (Doubleday, 1941, p. 640). Living in an era of reform marked by frequent movements such as the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, equalization of wealth and temperance, Hawthorne maintained a view that he expressed in his numerous imaginative writings, including *Earth's Holocaust* (Turner, 1942, p. 700). He asserted that "*there is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world, at every step, leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found the way to rectify.*" This remark is embodied in the narrator's final epiphany regarding the impossibility of attaining total perfection and purifying human sins solely through the efforts of the human intellect. It is also evident in the reformers' wrongdoings as they rely on the bonfire to rid of their past errors. Even though the narrator holds expectations for the reform in the initial stage, his faith is in abstract things of "Reason and Philanthropy," "the Great Book of Time," and "the Titan of Innovation," rather than in humankind itself. These three elements that bear his belief are all aspects of nature, signifying that nature is sublime and prevails over humankind. In this respect, humans cannot subdue the world to themselves but should adapt themselves to the world.

Hawthorne's criticism of reform has been closely linked to his determination to remain unaffected by his time and his indifference to the intellectual fervor that stirred his contemporaries. The magnitude and immediacy of the reform agitation during 1843-1844 panicked him and forced an entrance to the precinct of his writings (Turner, 1942, p. 704). Therefore, we can discover that his detachment from the era and his composure assigned him the role of observer of his society, along with the narrator's role as a bystander in *Earth's Holocaust*. As an observer, Hawthorne was capable of exploring the root of social reforms by studying the reformers around him and exploring historical accounts. Pitifully, his observations not only discovered earnest reformers, but also unearthed charlatans taking advantage of popular gullibility, and misguided individuals in pursuit of a better life. History has also convinced him that human endeavors to achieve genuine improvement are precarious, and paradoxically, noblest intentions have often accomplished tragic outcomes (Turner, 1942, p. 705). It is understandable that Hawthorne felt compelled to write allegories to warn society against the danger of fervent attempts at social reform.

Conclusion

The development of the narrator's ethical sensibility and the reformers' ethical choices, driven by their private interests, epitomize Hawthorne's critique of a social reform that strives for perfection and relies solely on human intellect while disregarding the inherent original sin in the human heart. As a satirical

allegory, *Earth's Holocaust* admonishes society to cautiously promote and engage in social reforms while conveying a rather pessimistic attitude towards the fundamental aspect of human nature –the heart, which harbors original sin. The prevalence of moral teachings in the novel, coupled with the narrator's religious concern, could potentially transformed the story into a less imaginative and more didactic tale. Nevertheless, *Earth's Holocaust* still offers readers an opportunity to grasp Hawthorne's views on society and interconnect his stories to formulate Hawthorne's ideas on original sin and reform movements.

References

- Abel, D. (1953). Modes of ethical sensibility in Hawthorne. *Modern Language Notes*, 68(2), 80-86.
- Doubleday, N. F. (1941). Hawthorne's criticism of New England life. *College English*, 2(7), 639-653.
- Doubleday, N. F. (1942). Hawthorne's satirical allegory. *College English*, 3(4), 325-337.
- Hawthorne, N. (1844). *Earth's Holocaust*. Retrieved from <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/512>.
- Kopley, R. (2018). Form and reform in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Earth's Holocaust." Explorations from Poe to the present, pp. 35-40. London: Boydell & Brewer.
- Manning, S. (1988). Nathaniel Hawthorne. *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 17(2), 109-125.
- Nie, Z. (2010). Ethical literary criticism: Its fundamentals and terms. *Foreign Literature Studies*, 1(32), 12-22.
- Nie, Z. (2011). Ethical literary criticism: Ethical choice and Sphinx factor. *Foreign Literature Studies*, 6(33), 1-13.
- Nie, Z. (2014). *Introduction to ethical literary criticism*, (1st ed.). Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Nie, Z. (2021). Ethical literary criticism: A basic theory. *Forum for World Literature Studies*, 2(13), 189-207.
- Scharnhorst, G. (1980). Images of the Millerites in American literature. *American Quarterly*, 32(1), 19-36.
- Turner, A. (1942). Hawthorne and reform. *The New England Quarterly*, 15(4), 700-714.
- Walsh, C. M. (2009). Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Biblical contexts. *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*, 1115.
- Weston, E. G. (1952). *Symbolism in the short stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Dissertations, Robert W. Woodruff Library.

Light and Darkness in Saint-Exupéry's *Night Flight*

Zongzong Pang, Jia Zhao*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3200103501@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] The novel *Night Flight*, authored by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, stands as an iconic piece of French literature, captivating readers with its exploration of the human experience. In this research, we will examine the multiple dimensions in which “light” and “darkness” manifest themselves, both literally and metaphorically. By studying the central role of the contrast between light and darkness in *Night Flight*, we gain a better understanding of the complexity of this major work of French literature and its lasting influence on our perception of human existence.

[Keywords] *Night Flight*; light; darkness

Introduction

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a French 20th century writer, was also a professional pilot. His in-depth knowledge of flight and first-hand flying experience allowed him to present a realistic, vivid depiction of a pilot's life. He drew on his aviation background to explore profound themes of general value, such as the meaning of life, individual duty, and heroism.

Saint-Exupéry's novel *Night Flight (Vol de Nuit)* centers around three postal planes returning to Buenos Aires from Patagonia, Chile and Paraguay, one of which tragically crashes in a storm. The author focuses on creating a group of characters engaged in aviation – facing loneliness, stress and the constant spectre of death while upholding responsibility, ideals and belief at all times.

The author explores various themes, among which the stark contrast between light and darkness stands out prominently. This article concentrates on highlighting this contrast, its importance in narrative construction, and conveying the writer's philosophical thoughts. Saint-Exupéry treats light and darkness metaphorically, attributing positive symbols such as the force of life and hope to manifestations of light, while darkness is not only associated with negative elements like oblivion, despair, or death – which in turn manifests vitality and eternity. The book is entitled *Night Flight*, but the author often refers to light as these two apparently opposing phenomena present a marvellous harmony, where light and darkness can be transformed into each other (Cor, 1973, p. 8). In the darkness of night, we find direction and hope by seeking the faint light. At the same time, behind the brilliance of light, unpredictable darkness also lurks, symbolizing life's uncertainties.

Literature Review

While this work has been studied in both Chinese and French academic circles, the perspectives and types of research of the two differ. In China, studies of the novel have focused on master's theses, and there is a lack of large-scale research. The analyses mainly revolved around the praise of humanity, heroism, sense of responsibility, quest for action, and sacrifice of personal happiness. For example, Liu Chang (2016, p. 23) defines the author's heroism by focusing mainly on the spirit of intrepid adventure and dedication, while Yuki Wang (2021, p. 349) analyzes Saint-Exupéry's philosophy of life in two dimensions: sky and

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: zhaojia1983@zju.edu.cn

ground. Foreign research on the book primarily occurred in the mid-to-late 20th century. In France, the scope of research on this novel is broader. For instance, L. A. Triebel (1951, p. 97) indicates that the work is driven by a love of mankind and a quest for the essential elements of humanity. Joseph T. McKeon (1974, p. 1087), in addition to focusing on the spiritual and conceptual aspects, highlights the author's breakthrough in the scientific field, as human beings can move freely in another dimension of space and, for the first time, see the true face of the Earth. Many scholars focus on specific image analyses, pointing out that the same imagery can encompass both aspects of light and darkness. For instance, Tanase (2018, pp. 169-171) conducted a study specifically on the star imagery, it symbolizes the ideals that humanity pursues in order to fulfill oneself and it also contains the negative sense – that of fatality, of implacable destiny; Benmebarek (2018, p. 187) indicates that the desert can be disorienting but is also a metaphor inspiring people to have an in-depth understanding of their own inner mind where real hopes and fortune can be found. Only Laurence W. Cor (1973, pp. 7-9) analyzed the meaning of the images of light and darkness, but he merely skimmed over this theme without providing a thorough classification or in-depth analysis. In our view, the manifestations of light usually recall certain aspects of the Earth and human life; the emptiness of darkness refers to forgetfulness and death. The deep implications of light and darkness in this work need to be examined further.

Methodology

The analytical part is based on one French original novel *Night Flight*. The text employs thematic analysis to explore certain images, including the sun, stars, fire and so on. It delves into the profound meanings behind these images and their roles in advancing the plot and shaping the characters. The analysis extends to the deeper theme of adventure, unraveling its nuances in the narrative. Adventure is likely examined as more than a physical journey; it may represent the characters' inner quests, personal growth, and the unpredictable nature of life.

The Image of "Light"

In *Night Flight*, the image of "light" carries an internal contradiction, which contains both natural and social dimensions: from a sensory standpoint, the desire for light is also a desire for human warmth; from an extrasensory aspect, light denotes secular life and exploration. In this section, we will analyze the image of light from three angles: the light of celestial bodies, the light of lightning, the light of fire and the light of lamps.

We first examine the light of celestial bodies. The group of natural images consists mainly of elements in nature that possess luminous characteristics, such as the sun and stars. As a pilot, the narrator perceives the light of celestial bodies from an entirely different perspective than those on the ground. The text, therefore, includes many descriptions of celestial bodies and their luminosity, reflecting the pilot's feelings in a safe or perilous situation.

Stars, with the ability to pierce through the darkness, frequently appear as vivid imagery in literary writing. In the Bible, Jesus compared himself to a star, because the appearance of a star can be seen as a crucial moment at the end of a long dark night, heralding the imminent arrival of light. In the context of *Night Flight*, the stars hold profound significance as symbols of light and life. For pilots, they represent clear nights, which are conducive for safe flight. In an environment with poor visibility, spotting starlight means that the environment ahead will improve and become much safer. Starlight is therefore a symbol of hope for pilots. For example, when Fabien observed starlight, he approached it without hesitation: "at this

very moment, starlight gleamed above his head...the stars...But such was his lust for light that he began to climb” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 66). And Fabien’s wife was “...heartened by the moon and stars” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 58) because they suggested that her husband was safe. Ground staff at the airport consider stars as a symbol of life: “If the plane and its lights were flying up to join the stars, it might be they would hear a sound – a singing star...” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 78).

Many writers in literature expressed a desire to reach for the sun, the source of light and warmth, the very principle of life itself (Mazzeo, 1956). Baudelaire wrote to his mother in 1865: “Paris is only beautiful in the sunshine, with its wonderful gardens” (Eigeldinger, 1967). He greets the dawn as an explosion of brightness and warmth, symbolizing the rebirth of life and the wholesome vigour that permeates the substance of all living beings. For the Sámi, the sun with its solar power, has served as a central focus for reverence and worship throughout history due to its ability to provide warmth and healing, transforming darkness into light and cold into warmth (Joy, 2020). In the novel under study, faced with a storm: “Fabien pictured the dawn as a beach of golden sand where a man might get a foothold after this hard night... And all the flotsam swirling in the shadows would lose its menace” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, pp. 52-53). Sunrise symbolizes rebirth, breakthrough of darkness, hope and eternity. The presence of the sun seems to dispel all opacity, reduce all obstacles, and radiate a light that symbolizes life.

Another source of light is lightning. In literature, lightning is often symbolically associated with exploration. To illustrate, in the poem *Light and Lightning*, the poet wrote: “Let lightning light up the darkness of ignorance; Let it light up our knowledge” (Bharathi, & Subramanyam, 1970); “lightning can also be illuminating... it can briefly erase ‘the Dark’ Thus, whereas the lightning promises disclosure amid the dark by means of illumination.” (Kohler, 2012). In the text, the author borrows similar symbolism, describing “the vista of lightning flashes led far inland”. Lightning represents new insights, discoveries or the beginning of an adventure, inspiring people to go forward and explore the unknown.

We then discuss the image of fire. In darkness, firelight can provide illumination, symbolizing hope and revelation. Fire also represents life and survival. The warmth and radiance of fire sustain the existence of life, making it one of the key factors in the development of human civilization. In this book, the image of fire appears twice. The first was the engine of the plane, expressing a forward momentum; at the same time, its fire is the only light in the darkness of the sky. This light is not just a concrete light, but embodies the complex of Prometheus, showcasing the adventurous pursuit of firelight (Bachelard, 1934, pp. 23-31), the conquest of nature by man: “The flame from the exhaust was getting on his nerves. There it was, clinging to the motor like a spray of fireflowers...but, in this nothingness, engulfing all the visible world” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 51). The other is a flare, which also symbolizes courage in the face of uncertainty and difficulty, as the novel describes about the pilot: “...he launched his only landing flare” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 65) to make one last daring attempt. In his final effort, the pilot expresses a complex of Empedocles, a spirit of love and reverence for fire, an instinct for life and death (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, pp. 35-44).

Turning to the image of lamp lights, on the one hand, lamps enable pilots to ascertain their location and provide a sense of hope through their illumination. “The mail from Chile reports that the lights of Buenos Aires can be seen” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 9). This signals that the pilot is about to arrive at his destination. On the other hand, the lamp represents the return to the homeland, and life itself, as they indicate the presence of people – or where there is light, there are people. When pilots observe the lights of thousands of homes from the air, they are reminded of their duties and responsibilities as pilots, contributing to the security and peace of their country. It is a recognition of the efforts they have made and one of the sources of their sense of achievement, which inspires them to overcome difficulties and confront darkness. The

novel describes it as follows: “They think, these peasants, that their lamp shines only for that little table; but, from fifty miles away, someone has felt the summons of their light, as though it were a desperate signal from some lonely island, flashed by shipwrecked men toward the sea” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 8).

This artificially created light has another meaning for pilots, it symbolizes secular life, and their attitude towards it is contradictory. On the one hand, the lamp symbolizes the expectation of love, representing familial warmth and personal happiness: “a world where a lamp shines at nightfall on the table, flesh calls to mated flesh, a homely world of love and hopes and memories” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 61). This light, taking the form of family life, friendships, love, or the realization of other personal aspirations, is a temptation for pilots. After Fabian set off on his journey, he still felt reluctant to part with this beam of light: “all he now could see was a cluster of lights...tempting him for the last time” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 6). Pilots, like everyone else, have deep-rooted desires for personal happiness and contentment. On the other hand, they are not satisfied with a mediocre life, believing that personal happiness is illusory: “this town...its light would seem as nothing” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 42). Therefore, they are willing to forego the comforts and happiness of the secular world and commit themselves to greater adventures and explorations to fulfill their innermost ambitions. Transcending the ordinary, they seek to challenge their limits, pursuing a higher purpose and seeking a sense of accomplishment.

The Image of “Darkness”

In literature, darkness is often associated with the unknown, with danger, solitude, or even death. We will analyse the image of darkness in two aspects: the silent ocean and the inky night. Regarding the nocturnal ocean, during the night, it melts into darkness and rolls silently along. The eternal waters of the ocean, with their profound depths shrouded in mystery, have always instilled real and unspeakable fears in the human imagination. Throughout history, the ocean, with its unpredictable nature, has long been a subject of terror and awe (Christiane, 2004). During an ocean crossing, one feels confined and oppressed by the presence of this vast void (Wilson, 1995). At the same time, the immensity of the ocean evokes a sense of mystery and an impossibility to control, and once one falls into it, he is engulfed by it. It seems like a deadly and eternal barrier that irrevocably separates the two worlds. When “the flare sputtered and spun, illumining a vast plain, then died away; beneath him lay the sea” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 65). People perceive the aqueous form of the ocean as a representation of the element of death (Bleeker, 1959), and pilots are already confronted with death.

In *Night Flight*, the night can be divided into two types, the quiet night and the stormy night. The author believes that serene nights can sometimes seem mundane, as nights are meant for exploration and adventure. If they are too quiet, they can appear banal and as “hollow as a stage without an actor” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 28). The most ideal state is achieving a “balance of light and shade”, which implies that pilots can carry out their actions in a safe environment, combining the ordinary with the extraordinary.

In contrast, the stormy night is one of the most evident dark images. Without the illumination of the moon or stars, the night sky presents a profound and infinite darkness, evoking a sense of boundlessness. “Heavy clouds were putting out the stars” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 30). Dark clouds evoke negative emotions because they cover the source of light and what is hidden behind the clouds is invisible, creating a sense of uncertainty. Furthermore, clouds are frequently linked to ideas of burdens and obstacles, and their weightiness can induce feelings of depression and suffocation.

Poets have perceived the night as a setting for difficult or dreadful circumstances, such as worries, sufferings, and ill omens (Moreux, 1967). The text of *Night Flight* contains numerous descriptions of the

night, and the author also employs numerous metaphors to make the descriptions figurative. For example, “But even those vagrant gleams were gone; at most there lingered patches in the mass of shadow where the night seemed less opaque” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 50) or “... home of the sun: Between them lay a gulf of night so deep that he could never clamber up again” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 53). Comparing the night to a pit conveys a sense of endless depth and unpredictability, which highlights the heaviness and unsettling nature of the night.

Darkness can also symbolize solitude, isolation, and separation. When a person is in such an environment, he may feel cut off from the world and lose contact with others. It becomes a moral constraint for the pilot, as Fabien expresses in the text that “he had no notion left how many hours more and what efforts would be needed to deliver him from fettering darkness” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 51). He felt as if he were being held by a myriad of dark arms, struggling to break free.

Furthermore, the association of darkness with death has existed since Antiquity: the Homeric man, lacking the concept of consciousness as we understand it, simply noted that the dying person had lost the use of their senses, especially the sense of sight: to live is to see the light of the sun, to die is to leave it. Consequently, death is associated with the darkness of the night (Moreux, 1967). The author of *Night Light* also drew upon such associations, describing the night as “like a very sea of strange fatality, the night was rolling up against him with all its rocks and reefs and wreckage” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 51). He also compared the night to a plague, which suggested that the darkness was not just an ordinary night but also brought devastating dangers.

Beyond the negative imagery, darkness has a transcendent meaning associated with it. Firstly, darkness symbolizes adventure and resistance to mediocrity. Despite the unknown nature of the night, that unknown was beatable: “Rivière felt that he had scored another point against fate, reduced the quantum of the unknown, and was drawing his charges in, out of the clutches of the night, toward their haven” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 9). For pilots, their willingness to bear the responsibility of this adventure could be compared to them pushing the unknown aside with their shoulders.

Darkness is also a stage for human action. Human beings are the builders of the human world, demonstrating their greatness through continuous action. The path to “eternity” is obtained through a series of ordinary actions. The author states that: “the work in progress was all that mattered” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 85). Although no one can see the end of this endless endeavour, it is precisely this infinite action that gives meaning to human existence. For Fabien, his efforts have become part of all the efforts that man has made, and his goal, is not yet lost. He has not failed, the description of his voyage to the Happy Isles is the proof of the author’s attitude: “We do not pray for immortality...but only not to see our acts and all things stripped suddenly of all their meaning” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 75). The author’s philosophy of action reinforces the romance of the story.

Darkness is a manifestation of personal willpower and vitality. It is in the night when one’s potential can be unleashed, and one can truly feel the essence of human existence. In the text, the author employed the metaphor of the body’s shadow to symbolize determination. This implies that, in the darkness, people must rely on their inner strength and resilience to confront challenges: “he could relish to its full the solid permanence, the weight and substance implicit in that dark form before him” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 31). In the light, things may appear more superficial and evident, but in darkness, individuals may be more prone to perceive the depth and mystique of existence. Exploring the unknown in darkness guides individuals to contemplate the meaning, purpose, and value of life. Therefore, the author contended that “the night once

more grew full of beauty and enthrallment” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 29). The night derives its vitality from adventure, from the tension between the characters’ dreams and the actions they take.

The Connotations of the Contrast between Light and Darkness

Light and darkness are often used as opposing or complementary concepts, both physically and symbolically. On the one hand, the images of light and darkness in *Night Flight* are opposed. The pilots are pioneers who brave the darkness and the dangers to push back the limits of the aerial domain. Their determination, collaboration, and bravery act like a beam of light piercing through the darkness, illuminating the path for human exploration and progress.

The contrast between light and darkness in *Night Flight* reflects Saint-Exupéry’s perspective on life and death. It underscores the significance of light as a symbol of life, while acknowledging the inherent dangers of darkness. It is through this tension between the two that the author emphasizes the love of life and creates the heroic image of the protagonists. In the novel, night flight is an activity that poses risks for the pilots, as they have to navigate in complete darkness without clear visual cues. Even amid a challenging natural environment, the pilot does not give up his quest for hope. It is not merely a thirst for hope, but rather an awakening of the individual’s consciousness of life. For the protagonist, who experiences painful suffering, the image of “light” symbolizes not only a kind of hope, comfort and redemption for his current situation, but also a desire for life.

In addition to visually observing the contrast between light and darkness, the novel’s juxtaposition of realistic descriptions of peril and poetic depictions of death also implies a kind of comparative relationship. In the storm, the pilot felt like he was “in the cabin of a ship swept by the waves” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 51) in which “the engine started thudding violently, setting all the plane aquiver” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 50). The author employs a highly realistic approach in describing the dangers faced by the pilot, yet when it comes to the actual arrival of death, a romanticized treatment is employed. “But somewhere in the hills, no longer dark with menace, amid the fields and flocks, a world at peace again, two children would seem to sleep” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 71). In this sentence, the author describes death as falling asleep, employing the technique of softening the depiction of death to create an illusion of reality. This technique of blurring death is an indirect reflection of the fact that the pilot was calm in the face of death, in line with the author’s celebration of heroism: not dwelling excessively on individual mortality but rather focusing on the eternal spirit of the entire nation.

The following sentence reflects the author’s attitude towards light and night: “And yet one day, inevitably, those golden sanctuaries vanish like mirage...There is, perhaps, some other thing, something more lasting, to be saved” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 62). Light is superficial, illusory, and fleeting, while the night embodies essence, reality, and enduring existence. This is because light symbolizes personal and worldly happiness, while night represents a deeper meaning that transcends banal happiness. It is the life that faces the darkness head-on that is valuable.

On the other hand, the two are unified. The pilot relies on lights to illuminate his path, but it is precisely in the darkness that light manifests itself; the darkest moments may hold the most promising rays (Antoine, 1967). This interdependence underlines the fact that light and darkness are not opposing forces, but rather are complementary ones. In our quest for discovery, we need light to guide us, but we also need darkness to demonstrate the value and significance of light. Aside from its ominous nature, darkness can also express comfort and welcome. For example, “and it rejoiced him to enter into this one night with a measured

slowness, as into an anchorage” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 35). This is consistent with the meaning conveyed by the imagery of light.

Moreover, darkness and light are successive. This aspect is reflected in the succession of the two at the same time. “The night is fine here and starry, Rivière thought, yet those fellows can detect in it the breath of the distant storm” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 35). At any given time, the same patch of sky can exhibit drastically different states. In addition, light and darkness succeed each other in the same space: “Below him still the storm was fashioning another world, thriddled with squalls and cloudbursts and lightnings, but turning to the stars a face of crystal snow” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 67). Moreover, the night envelopes everyone without distinction, everyone is “under the same dark vault of heaven” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 24).

Light and darkness can also combine with each other to create a perilous situation. For instance, “he sought to catch those vague gleams which, even in darkest nights, flit here and there. But even those vagrant gleams were gone; at most there lingered patches in the mass of shadow” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 50). “The flame from the exhaust was getting on his nerves. There it was, clinging to the motor like a spray of fire flowers...but, in this nothingness, engulfing all the visible world” (Saint-Exupéry, 1931, p. 51). At this moment, the light was faint, unstable, and had lost its ability to pierce the darkness; it had become a part of the night.

Conclusion

In *Night Flight*, the contrast between light and darkness plays a crucial role in depicting the experience of midnight aviators and generating a heroic image. In our article, we have elucidated the images of light and darkness in this novel and the connotations of the contrast between the two. The moments when light pierces through the darkness, whether through the breaking dawn or the sparkling stars, offer moments of hope and beauty, but also underline the fragility of the human condition in the face of the forces of darkness, highlighting the value of perseverance in the face of adversity.

References

- Antoine, G. (1967). The night in Baudelaire’s works. *Journal of Literary History of France*, 67(2), 375-401.
- Bachelard, G. (1934). *The psychoanalysis of fire*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Benmebarek, N. (2018). The desert: Between ambivalence and complementarity in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s work. *Revue Expressions*, (5), 34-43.
- Bharathi, S., & Subramanyam, K. N. (1970). Light and lightning. *Indian Literature*, 13(2), 43-45.
- Bleeker, C. J. (1959). Some reflections on the religious significance of the sea. *Numen*, 6(3), 234-240.
- Chang, L. (2016). On the definition of hero in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s ‘Night Flight’. Central China Normal University.
- Christiane, V. G. (2004). *The sea, terror, and fascination*. National Library of France, 1st edition.
- Cor, L. W. (1973). “Vol de nuit”: The world of light and darkness. *Romance Notes*, 15(1), 7-9.
- Eigeldinger, M. (1967). Solar symbolism in Baudelaire’s poetry. *Journal of Literary History of France*, 67(2), 357-374.
- Joy, F. (2020). The importance of the sun symbol in the restoration of Sámi spiritual traditions and healing practice. *Religions*, (6).

- Kohler, M. (2012). The apparatus of the dark: Emily Dickinson and the epistemology of metaphor. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 67(1), 58-86.
- Mazzeo, J. A. (1956). Dante's sun symbolism. *Italica*, 33(4), 243-251.
- McKeon, J. T. (1974). Saint-Exupéry, the myth of the pilot. *PMLA*, 89(5), 1084-1089.
- Moreux, B. (1967). Night, shadow, and death in Homer. *Phoenix*, 21(4), 237-272.
- Saint-Exupéry, A. (1931). *Night flight*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Tanase, D. (2018). The symbolics of the star in the work of Antoine de Saint-Expéry. *Limba Şi Literatura – Repere Identitare in Context European*, (23), 167-174.
- Triebel, L. A. (1951). The humanism of Saint-Exupery. *The Australian Quarterly*, 23(1), 92-103.
- Wang, Y. K. (2021). The interpretation of the characters of *Night Flight* in the threshold of space and the primary exploration of St. Exupery's philosophy of life. (eds.) *Proceedings of the 14th Graduate Student Symposium and the 4th Doctoral Forum on Foreign Languages and Literatures*, College of Foreign Languages, Xiamen University.
- Wilson, E. (1995). *From the uncollected*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Meteorological Vocabulary in *Doctor Zhivago*: Parts of Speech and Semantic Valency

Ruyi Ren, Miaoxu Yuan¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: renruiyuzr@icloud.com

[Abstract] *Doctor Zhivago*, the work for which Boris Leonidovich Pasternak won the Nobel Prize for Literature in the 1950s, is of high literary and artistic value, and is imbued with the writer's passionate feelings and profound philosophical thinking. The study of Pasternak and his works has long been a hot topic in the academic world, and the analysis and exploration of his natural imagery is relatively mature. However, less attention has been paid to the overall category of weather. The study focuses on the semantics and functions of meteorological vocabulary in the novel, analyzing its features and functions at the level of lexical distribution and semantic collocation through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research.

[Keywords] meteorological vocabulary; *Doctor Zhivago*; parts of speech; semantic valency

Introduction

Doctor Zhivago is a novel by the famous Russian poet and writer Boris Leonidovich Pasternak, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1958. Many scholars have focused on the literary and artistic nature of the novel, studied Pasternak's writing style, and explored its spiritual world. Professor Wang Jiezhi believes that *Doctor Zhivago* not only presents history, but also has a rich narrative art (2010). Professor Du Yuji pointed out in the article that there are rich descriptions of the natural environment in *Doctor Zhivago* and the elements of time and space are intrinsically related to the plot (2019). It can be seen that in the grand narrative of the novel, the presentation of nature occupies an important position and has a special function. The research attempts to explore the semantics and functions of weather phenomena as part of the environmental description of novels, starting from the meteorological vocabulary.

Conceptual Discussion and Classification of Meteorological Vocabulary

The Concept of Meteorological Vocabulary

To study the meteorological vocabulary in the novel *Doctor Zhivago*, the concept and the classification criteria should be clarified. The concept of meteorological vocabulary comes from meteorology. Meteorology is a science that studies the atmosphere and its physical phenomena, a discipline that treats the atmosphere as an object of study and describes its characteristics both qualitatively and quantitatively. Under the umbrella of meteorology, words that objectively depict meteorological phenomena are known as meteorological vocabulary.

This study explicitly takes meteorological vocabulary as the research object, mainly focuses on the weather characteristics they represent and the impact on the environment and character psychology. It is committed to analytics of the expression effect and role of meteorological vocabulary in the plot from the functional perspective.

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: galinayuan@hotmail.com.

Classification of Meteorological Vocabulary

In the current research on meteorological vocabulary, the classification standards are different, and there is no uniform rule. Based on meteorological expertise, combined with the expressive characteristics of literature, and referring to the inductive principles and classification methods of vocabulary in Chinese and Russian linguistic research, the study takes the semantics of words as the primary criterion. The meteorological vocabulary used in this study is defined as: words in fiction that describe meteorology and weather phenomena. According to the semantic content, it is divided into two categories: unmixed meteorological words and mixed meteorological words. Unmixed meteorological words refer to words that correspond to only one meteorological phenomenon, such as wind, snow, rain, and mixed meteorological words refers to two or more meteorological phenomena, such as blizzards, and dusk, and contains general meteorological words, such as “weather”; it can also include words that indicate meteorological states, such as “thaw”. Within the category of unmixed meteorological words, meteorological phenomena can be further classified according to material/immaterial ideas. The criterion for judging materiality is that this phenomenon has entities, which can correspond to the three major categories of solids, liquids or gases. Immateriality includes weather phenomena such as thunder and sunlight that have no physical substance but can be perceived by characters. Since mixed weather words contain a variety of meteorological phenomena at the semantic level, the study does not make a particularly detailed classification.

In summary, on the basis of determining the concept and classification criteria, the semantic screening of meteorological words in the Russian National Corpus was used as a reference, and a total of 693 meteorological words were extracted. However, some meteorological words have both the semantics of meteorological terms and the semantics of common use, which cannot be well distinguished by the screening of the corpus, so the research continues to read through the original Russian text of the novel through manual proofreading, analyze the real semantic content of polysemy words in the original sentence of the novel, and finally extract 86 different meteorological words. The semantic level includes wind, snow, rain, clouds, thunder, fog and other more common meteorological phenomena, and there are also more special phenomena such as frost and wind cyclones. At the level of parts of speech, it mainly includes nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, which are the four typical parts of speech. In general, the extraction results of vocabulary can basically cover the items divided in the previous classification, and the vocabulary types are relatively rich.

The Distribution of Parts of Speech of Meteorological Vocabulary

The meteorological words in *Doctor Zhivago* roughly include the four major parts of speech of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Word frequency count shows a total of 53 nouns, 13 verbs, 17 adjectives and 3 adverbs.

Characteristics of the Distribution of Parts of Speech

Nouns: Use noun sentences to express the environment and expand the semantics in the fifth case form. The statistical results show that there are more nouns than verbs and adjectives overall, accounting for about 62% of all meteorological words. From a macroscopic point of view, meteorological nouns are used more or can correspond to independent weather scenes in the text, mostly indicating weather conditions, with strong continuity. Nouns mostly appear as the main body of sentences, supporting the description of weather, and are relatively objective.

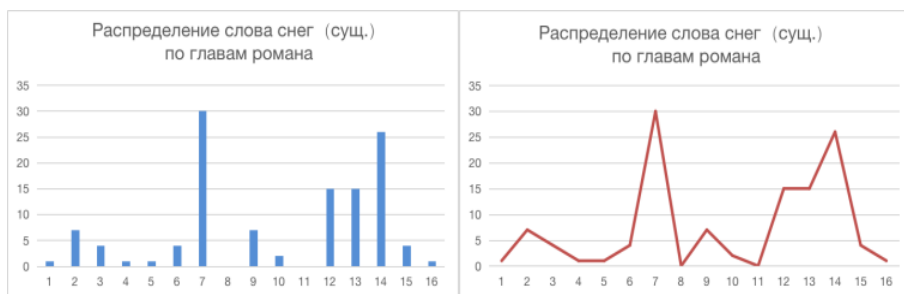
Specifically, the novel uses meteorological nouns to describe the environment. Nominal sentences generally refer to single sentences composed of nouns or the noun phrases. Nominal sentences have been one of the objects of study in Russian linguistics since as early as the beginning of the 20th century. Most of them are used in novels to describe the environment and form narrative time and space, which can carry rich content in a concise form. For example, the statement in Chapter 3, “А снега, снега!” not only belongs to the Nominal sentence, but also emphasizes it through the repeated composition of meteorological nouns, giving it emotional content.

It is worth noting the declension of meteorological terms. More prominent are the words “вихрь” and “град”; the five-case form of the two derived the connotation of “like what” in its original semantics. This form of word can expand the original semantics in the expression and provide rhetorical meaning.

Verbs: Weather descriptions are formed with the help of tenses and impersonal sentences. There are 13 verb meteorological words in the novel. Although there are not many of them, they still play an important role in the expression of weather. As one of the most important categories of real words in the Russian language, verbs are rich in conjugation forms that fully reflect the distinctive characteristics of the Russian language (Jia, 2023). The diverse forms of Russian verbs are closely related to their rich morphology. The tense of the verb can constitute an indicative meaning at the level of time and space, and the novel provides temporal information for the expression of the plot by changing the temporal meaning of the meteorological verb. For example, “Скоро стемнеет”, or in the past tense “В форточки дул теплый ветер с юга”, can also be paired with verbs that indicate beginning, end, etc., to indicate a gradual state or a period of continuity, such as “Стало темнеть”, and “На улице начинало темнеть”.

It is also worth noting that meteorological verbs are more likely to form impersonal sentences in their expressions (Zhang, F., 2012). Zhang Huisen pointed out in a study that the meaning of impersonal sentences is “to indicate natural phenomena, weather and climate and other phenomena or natural forces acting on the surrounding environment of the process and its consequences” (2006), and impersonal sentences are closely related to meteorological verbs. Taking the verb “темнеть” as an example, its word frequency in the novel is 17, and there are 11 uses of impersonal sentences, accounting for about 65%, showing that this kind of sentence is more commonly used. At the level of application, it exhibits characteristics that are dominated by the past tense, such as “Уже совсем стемнело.”

Adjectives: The distribution of nouns and their same-rooted adjectives in the novel have convergence. Comparing the data, it was found that Meteorological adjectives often share the same root as meteorological nouns, such as “снег-снеговой/снежный” and “холод-холодный”. They are semantically closely related and tend to be distributed similarly across the chapters of the novel. As shown in the figure, the distribution of nouns in each chapter of the novel is compiled into a bar chart and a line chart to visually reflect the numbers and distribution trend. The distribution data of the same-rooted word is also made into a chart in the same way to form a comparison between the upper and lower lines. The upper and lower two lines of the charts have peaks in Chapter 2, Chapter 7, and Chapters 9, 12 and 14. Although the number of adjectives is significantly less than that of nouns, the overall distribution trend is very similar, from the perspective of parts of speech, to confirm the characteristics of meteorological words in macroscopic aggregation distribution.



Tables 1, 2. *The Distribution of the Noun “Snow” in the Chapters of Doctor Zhivago*



Tables 3, 4. *The Distribution of the Adjective “Snowy” in the Chapters of Doctor Zhivago*

This phenomenon of word distribution reflects the aggregation characteristics of meteorological words in the work, and the use of the same root vocabulary is essentially a variety of expressions of the same thing, reflecting the richness of the novel’s language.

The Function of the Distribution of Parts of Speech

Corresponding to the characteristics of the word distribution of the above meteorological vocabulary, the study further analyzes its function in the novel.

Noun. Nouns account for the largest proportion in the novel, mostly outlining the weather picture of a fixed scene, and less involving spatial changes, but can be used to hint at the plot, theme and character psychology through the metaphorical function of weather phenomena. At the same time, the use of nouns mostly presents objective content, which can be regarded as a subjective impression or a reflection of abstract themes and can functionally serve as an entity that contrasts with the unreal, giving the theme of the novel a foothold.

The fifth form of the noun has a figurative rhetorical function, which can establish the reader’s figurative cognition of a certain characteristic and play an important role as a medium for understanding the novel. The object of the metaphor is not necessarily a person but can also be an objectively existing natural thing or an abstract character thinking. The novel uses the fifth form of the noun “вихрь” in three places to form a metaphor, but each time it refers to a different one, which shows the flexibility of the author’s expression and the richness of the description.

Verb. Meteorological verbs mostly express their meaning through impersonal sentence expressions. From the perspective of semantics, impersonal sentences usually express the behavior of unknown subjects and natural states. This usage of meteorological verbs fully reflects the objectivity, unpredictability and mystery of weather phenomena as a part of the natural world. From a grammatical point of view, the impersonal sentence has restrictions on the subject, verb and other components of the sentence, and cannot

have a definite subject, and the inflected form of the verb must have “singleness” in the past tense, present tense and future tense (Xu, & Liu, 2013). Most of the meteorological verbs extracted from novels are not affected by such restrictions, and the description of natural phenomena is usually in the form of “no subject”, so it can be said that the writing of meteorological phenomena and impersonal sentences are mutually accomplished.

Adjective. Most meteorological adjectives in the novel have the same root as meteorological nouns, and the distribution of the two in each chapter of the work is similar, reflecting the concentration and meticulousness of the meteorological description, the richness of words, and the construction of a complete spatial background to serve the plot. At the same time, there is a certain correspondence between adjectives of the same root, which can constitute “corresponding words”. The concept of corresponding words is slightly different from words with the same root (Zhang, L., 1983). Generally, they have similar pronunciation, have the same grammatical attributes, and belong to the same part of speech. Although there is a certain relationship between phrases, they are not synonyms. Similar corresponding phrases in novels include “снеговой-снежный”, and “снег-снегопад-снеговорот”, etc. Most of them are associated with “снег”. The use of words with the same root and corresponding words can enhance the expressiveness of the language and improve the expression effect. When expressing weather and environmental characteristics, the reuse of a word class is monotonous, and the corresponding word does have the functions of emphasis, rhyme, rhetoric, and image shaping in practical applications, and the arrangement of words in the novel can also reflect Pasternak’s exquisite control of language as a poet.

The Centralized Distribution of Meteorological Words Helps to Shape the Characters

While the content is rich and the language is accurate, the concentrated distribution of meteorological words plays an important role in shaping the character temperament and promoting the development of the plot, making it more effective. For example, the meteorological word “ветер” is closely associated with the image of the heroine Lara. In Verse 14 of Chapter 4, Zhivago and Lara meet in a field hospital on the front line and when he feels the wind, Lara appears. Also in Chapter 9, Verse 13, they meet again at Valecino, and the author sets a windy scenario at the beginning of the chapter. In these two passages, 7 words related to wind appear in a row, and wind symbolizes sacredness, freedom, and fickleness. In the novel, Lara is a divine existence for Zhivago, once appearing in the dreams of his illness, and is also one of Zhivago’s spiritual sustenances; a female figure that can resonate with him spiritually. The days with Lara are indeed full of variables, invisibly in line with the symbolic meaning of the image of “wind”. Meteorological words play a role in setting off the character image here, meanwhile suggesting the development of the relationship between the characters.

The Semantic Valence of Meteorological Vocabulary

Meteorological vocabulary is difficult to express with complete semantics independently and needs to be properly paired with other components in the sentence. Therefore, for this kind of combination of two or more words, and at least one of the meteorological words, the subordination and dominance relationship can be analyzed, and then its characteristics and functions can be studied. “Semantic valence” refers to the necessary situational participants of predicates (verbs, adjectives, nouns), and predicates, together with their semantic valence, constitute the complete semantic structure of the predicate (Yu, 2006).

Features of Semantic Valence

This study refers to the semantic valence of Apresyan Yuri Derenikovich. It summarizes the distribution of semantic collocation mode in combination with the novel and obtains the main characteristics of semantic valence.

Agent more than object. According to the analysis, the semantic valence of meteorological words in sentences is mainly based on the agent, while the object is relatively rare. When the word meteorological appears as a word to describe weather phenomena, it is usually accompanied by a corresponding verb and is dominant in the sentence. When the word is in a dominant position, it is an objective manifestation of the weather phenomenon, as part of the natural background of the novel, while when the weather word is in a subordinate position, it is mostly a subjective description of the meteorological phenomenon, which is mainly manifested as the character's perception and feeling of the weather. It can be concluded that the objective presence of weather in the content of the novel is more than the subjective feelings of the characters.

Meteorological words and prepositions mostly form noun phrases. In the process of analyzing the semantic valence, the collocation of prepositions and meteorological nouns also accounts for a large proportion. Although the preposition is a virtual word, it also occupies an important place in Russian grammar. The prepositions in the novel are more abundant with meteorological nouns, mainly to indicate time, place and conditions, forming different noun phrases. On this basis, there are also cases where a noun phrase is formed using the preposition “с” to indicate mixed meteorology, such as “мороз с туманом”, and “снег с дождем”, etc. In addition, there are fixed collocations with prepositions, such as “как снег на голову”, and “Ищи ветра в поле”, etc. These collocations derive new meanings based on the basic semantics of the word. In the semantic valence type module, more than half of the typical collocations listed are related to preposition collocations.

Meteorological depictions are placed in the context of time. Meteorological words often appear together with nouns that indicate time, forming a more multi-layered and vivid description. This feature is more evident in the collocation of meteorological adjectives and nouns, such as “Стояли теплые дни конца февраля”. Specifically, objective meteorological descriptions are placed in a broader context of time, forming a depth in time and space, so that weather and all natural things are closely linked. The weather phenomena represented by meteorological words are placed in a time range and act as part of it to form a more complete timeline.

The Function of Semantic Valence

According to the analysis of the semantic valence characteristics of meteorological words above, the function is further explored.

Meteorological words and prepositions expand the scope of semantics. In the process of studying the characteristics of semantic collocation, it is more obvious that the collocation of meteorological words and prepositions constitutes a richer logical relationship, among which the more representative is the semantic relationship of “condition” and “cause”, so that meteorological vocabulary can expand the semantic scope and application context on the basis of representing weather, environment, time and other content, and have additional functions.

The conditional relationship structure is the reflection and expression of the conditional-consequential connection between things (Yu, S., 1991). This is a more common logical relationship. For example, in this sentence, “Рельсы не выдерживали пробы на прогиб и излом и по предположениям Антипова

должны были лопаться на морозе”, the cold environment causes the water pipe to burst, which constitutes a logical condition-result relationship. If there is no conditional relationship, cold weather only acts as an environmental background in the sentence, and the structure makes the semantic range and association range of meteorological words broader, which can enhance the richness of the novel’s language.

Fixed collocations with meteorological words enhance the appeal of the novel. There are two obvious expressions of fixed collocations of meteorological words in the novel, which are related to the two words “wind” and “snow”. One is “как снег на голову”. Zhivago mentioned it when he wrote to Tonya at the front line for the first time. The promise to Tonya appears a second time in Chapter 7, Section 30: “Во все эти места он сваливался как снег на голову, судил, приговаривал, приводил приговоры в исполненна ие, быстро, сурово, бестрепетно.” Here it is a scene describing the character Strelnikov falling from the sky and stabilizing the situation when suppressing the riot. The expressions of these two fixed collocations both have the characteristics of metaphor, and “снег” has deviated from its original meaning. The explanation in the dictionary is: “out of the blue”. The expression is more vivid, combined with the frequency of “снег”: appearing in the text as high as 118 times, we can see the author’s preference for this word in use.

The second is that the collocation “Ищи ветра в поле” also appears twice in the novel. Firstly, in Paragraph 5 of Chapter 6, when talking with Zhivago, the director of the anatomy room mentions that there was a robbery in the area where Serebryany and Morchanovka directly intersect: “Оберут, разденут, и фюить, ищи ветра в поле.” And then in Chapter 10, “Кончились гастроли, ищи ветра в поле.” There is a riot in the village. The interpretation of this fixed expression in the dictionary is running away in chaos, which is also extended in the novel. In addition, the sentence “Каким вас ветра занесло?” when Lara and Zhivago meet in Valegino, also uses the meteorological word “wind”, which is very similar to the expression in Chinese, having the same effect. The phrases and fixed expressions related to meteorological words occupy a place in the novel, making the language more appealing.

The use of meteorological words is closely related to the theme of the novel. On this basis, the semantic field formed by the combination of meteorological words and other words serve the novel, which is convenient for the rendering and expression of the theme.

Meteorological words appear together with content related to “life and death”, taking the objective environment as the cornerstone, building a grander language space, which is closely related to the theme of the work. The novel begins with the funeral of Zhivago’s mother, on a cold, rainy day. His sad memories of losing his mother and his first intuitive recognition of death are closely connected to the intention of “rain”. The second awakening of this impression is when Tonya’s mother, Anna Ivanovna, dies: when the requiem prayer is completed, the ceremony is over, and the people are scattered; Zhivago then discovers that the funeral monastery was the place where his mother was buried, evoking memories of his childhood experiences. Snowstorms, heavy rain and cold form part of the protagonist’s perception of the event of death. At the same time, witnessing death again makes Zhivago think more deeply, and he had never been able to clearly recognize the two aspects of art: death and life. Wind, rain and snow are the companions of death here, but they also inspire creation and rebirth, which not only provokes the thinking of the characters, but also leads the reader to feel the theme of the work and the philosophy of the author.

At the end of the novel, Zhivago’s death is also hinted at by a related weather phenomenon. Zhivago boarded the tram to Nikita Street early one late August morning. The train had daily accidents, but on this day it stopped on the road without accident, blocking the entire line of traffic. Dark clouds are climbing in the sky, and torrential rain is about to pour down, which, combined with the crowded state of the train,

reveals a dark, sultry atmosphere. Zhivago begins to think about the question of who is close to death first, which is also about life and death. This depiction includes thunder, lightning and heavy rain, followed by a wind that blows the leaves and rolls over, the rain finally pouring down, and the doctor's life coming to an end. The plot here echoes the beginning of the novel: the death of Zhivago's mother forms a kind of care, both in the stormy time, generating thoughts about life and death, ushering in the death that must be faced.

Conclusion

After analyzing the meteorological vocabulary in the novel, the following conclusions are drawn:

At the level of part of speech distribution, meteorological nouns account for the majority, showing static characteristics, and tend to be objective in expression. The fifth form of nouns can expand semantics and have rhetorical functions. Verbs can convey key elements of the novel's plot through tense changes, and the use of impersonal sentences also complements the natural attributes of the weather. Adjectives mostly have the same root as nouns, and their distribution characteristics converge. Using different forms of meteorological vocabulary in the same weather description makes the expression more vivid and rich. In addition, the concentrated distribution of meteorological words plays an important role in shaping the image of characters and promoting the development of the plot.

At the level of semantic valence, the novel is mainly based on the agent, and the meteorological words are mostly used as the subject in the sentence. They are in a dominant position, and their objectivity corresponds to the characteristics of the distribution of parts of speech. At the same time, the semantic valence of meteorological words and prepositions forms a richer logical relationship, which serves the expression and turning point of the plot, and the fixed phrase collocation presents the agile characteristics of Pasternak's language, which can give a glimpse of the expressive characteristics of the novel. The meteorological words are paired with the theme of "life and death" to build a more infectious narrative, vividly reflecting the theme of the novel and the author's philosophy.

References

- Du, Y. (2019). Reading Doctor Zhivago: The hidden conflict between nature and event. *Overseas English*, (12), 190-191.
- Jia, D. (2023). Pragmatic functions of past tense forms of Russian verbs. *Journal of Heihe College*, (01), 140-142+145.
- Wang, J. (2010). The historical writing and narrative art of Doctor Zhivago. *Contemporary Foreign Literature*, 31(04), 5-14.
- Xu, X., & Liu, Y. (2013). A study on the compositional morphosyntactic grouping of Russian "Светаёт"-type impersonal sentences. *Russian in China*, (03), 41-46.
- Yu, S. (1991). Conditional relation semantics and its means of expression in modern Russian. *Russian in China*, (03), 18-22.
- Yu, X. (2006). Apresyan and its semantic theory. *Journal of PLA College of Foreign Languages*, (02), 29-33.
- Zhang, F. (2012). Semantic analysis of Russian impersonal sentences. *Russian in China*, 31(01), 16-20.
- Zhang, H. (2006). *The latest Russian grammar*. Beijing Commercial Press.
- Zhang, L. (1983). An introduction to Russian equivalents. *Journal of Central China Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, (04), 73-77.

Indirect Communication in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

Chaoran Xing, Chen Su^{*1}

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3210106067@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] This purpose of this article is to substantiate the thesis that the indirect communication in *Persuasion* contributes to the maturation of characters, especially their cognitive power, and the development of their romantic relationship, therefore manifesting the beauty of the novel. This article compares direct and indirect communication, analyzes characters' reactions to overhearing and retelling, and thereby emphasizes their function in *Persuasion* of Jane Austen.

[Keywords] Jane Austen; *Persuasion*; indirect communication; overhearing; retelling

Introduction

As Jane Austen's last completed novel, *Persuasion* is the most psychologically developed compared with her other novels. Virginia Woolf remarked on this book as having "a peculiar beauty" because "she is trying to do something which she has never yet attempted" (Woolf, 2002, p. 82). As to what is the beautiful thing that Austen did not try before, opinions are various. Austen's transformation from "rationalism" to "romanticism" is considered as an important element, manifested by Anne's mental power gaining as she grows older (Lin, 2000) and further analyzed from the cognitive dimension of the characters' emotions (Guan, 2022). Another focus is embodied emotions, manifesting themselves as overdetermined embodied cognition, which eludes the grasp of human consciousness (Chen, 2022). Accordingly, embodied language typically contributes to Austen's aesthetics, as the sensation of bodily motion is made in narrative. This is especially advanced by *Persuasion*, in which the sensation of language creates sensory immersion (Quinn, 2017). Some focus on the plot that isn't much involved in Austen's previous novels such as new-style naval officers or indirect communication between main characters. Other research focuses on the "somberness" of this book, holding that "danger and anxiety had emanated from the past and they are now, at the end, projected onto the future" (Kudish, 2016).

Apart from exploring its connotation, the influence of *Persuasion* is also gaining popularity. First, is its influence on other books. Austen's novels are sometimes parodied or referred to by metafiction, which evoke relevant research. For example, the intertextuality between *Persuasion* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* shows characteristics of Victorian fallen women (Azerêdo, 2021). Second, is its influence on readers, both positive and negative. The imperialist discourse embedded in *Persuasion* is exposed, such as through the favorable description of the British Navy, so as to achieve intellectual decolonization for colonized nations (Abd-Rabbo, Zalloum, & Nemrawi, 2023). *Persuasion*'s function of improving readers' moral imagination is also pointed out. Mainly through focalized narrative and free indirect discourse, readers are guided to investigate characters and explain their actions (Kopajtic, 2022).

This article focuses on the beauty of indirect communication, which is only about the book rather than its influence. Though in Jane Austen's world, it is not rare that women get reports about conversations or actions that happen among men (Warhol-Down, 2010), *Persuasion* has far less direct communication between the hero and heroine, compared with Austen's previous works. The plot of *Persuasion* largely

*Corresponding author. Email address: suchen@zju.edu.cn

relies on reports from others and overhearing. This article is to analyze the function of the indirect communication through which Anne Eliot and Captain Wentworth come to a mutual understanding. To substantiate the indispensable role of indirect discourse and its contribution to the aesthetic appeal of *Persuasion*, a variety of comparative analyses are conducted.

My reflections on indirect communication in *Persuasion* have been inspired by the article by Grażyna Bystydzińska (2018), which points out the frequent use of the device of overhearing and interprets Anne's character on the basis of this (Bystydzińska, 2018). He holds that social life and its rules of decorum and superficial politeness are frequently tinged with hypocrisy. And this impedes actual contact between people, and therefore observation has become a necessary substitute. I agree with the importance of observation. But I consider indirect communication not only a substitute, but an indispensable tool that is more effective than direct communication for Anne and Frederick to gain maturation and make a proper choice for marriage. Thereby, the beauty of marriage is achieved.

In *Persuasion*, beauty manifests itself as the maturation of cognitive power and the resonance of hearts. Anne and Frederick have already broken up. As a result, it is quite reasonable to have very little direct communication between them. Their conflict goes beyond Lady Russell's persuasion, which is just the surface reason. Material constraints, of course, contribute to the cancellation of their engagement.

What is more, Frederick is not yet mature enough. His understanding of Anne is insufficient to support them through more potential upcoming challenges. And indirect communication like overhearing and retelling from others is not only for the sake of plot coherence but also to enable both individuals to observe and interpret each other from a third-person perspective. Without words shown to them deliberately, they capture their lovers' subtlest thoughts and guess their psychological activities through every retelling and overhearing. This is the most sincere and beautiful kind of love. Thus, observation works not only on their relationship but also on their cognitive power. Consequently, they attain comprehensive understanding and acceptance, opting for each other once again, despite the minimal direct communication.

Reports from Other People

Reports from others are an important way for Anne to learn about Frederick and others. Getting information from a third person is, of course, risky, for words are largely likely to have been filtered or distorted. Anne's remark on others' reports can be found in Chapter 15. "Allowances, large allowances, she knew, must be made for the ideas of those who spoke. She heard it all under embellishment. All that sounded extravagant or irrational in the progress of the reconciliation might have no origin but in the language of the relators" (1995, p.92). Clearly, Anne has perceived the subjectivity of these reports. Therefore, she collects secondhand information and gives her interpretations prudently according to the personality of the relater.

The Unreliability of Direct Communication

Truth serves as the basis of beauty. From Anne's interactions with Mr. Elliot, we can compare the functions of reports with those of face-to-face conversations. Mr. Elliot, in contrast to Frederick Wentworth, has much more direct communication with Anne. As a pursuer of Anne, his interactions with her can be compared and analyzed alongside the interactions between Anne and Frederick. He has a knack for leaving a perfectly favorable impression on others. He is nearly flawless throughout his direct communication with Anne. On their first formal meeting, Anne highly praises his demeanor. "She could compare them in excellence to only one person's manners. They were not the same, but they were, perhaps, equally good" (Austen, 1995, p. 94). He leaves a good impression on Anne. But we can find the discreet word "perhaps," showing that

Anne is very cautious about remarking on others. She would not make a definitive judgement about a person merely based on one face-to-face conversation.

When Mr. Elliot becomes known to Lady Russell, even such an elegant lady with “composed mind and polite manners” (Austen, 1995, p. 96) thinks that Mr. Elliot is “a more agreeable or estimable man” (Austen, 1995, p. 96), emphasizing the complete integrity shown by that gentleman. But Anna does not follow this decent lady. She realizes her difference from Lady Russell and insists on her independent thinking pattern. Therefore, though she agrees that “Lady Russell should see nothing suspicious or inconsistent, nothing to require more motives than appeared” (Austen, 1995, p. 97), she does not give such an absolute answer. For Anne, what appears now is not enough to draw a conclusion. She needs deeper interactions than a few meetings.

Though Anne is careful, she is still deceived by the illusory good manners and personalities shown by Mr. Elliot. After a month’s acquaintance, she came to the same conclusion as Lady Russell. “That he was a sensible man, an agreeable man – that he talked well, professed good opinions, seemed to judge properly and as a man of principle – this was all clear enough” (Austen, 1995, p. 106). While an abundance of direct interactions fails to reveal the ugliness of Mr. Elliot, a report from Mrs. Smith does. Her reliable retelling and the evidence of a letter shed light on Anne. As a selfish, cunning, and treacherous man, Mr. Elliot puts on a gentlemanly facade, attempting to marry Anne and secure his position as the heir to the baronet. The real personality revealed by this report contrasts sharply with what he shows in public. Through this unexpected twist, Austen shows her doubt about direct communication’s reliability. For some sophisticates, they can act in an almost perfect way in dealings with others. We need to resort to some indirect information to move off the make-believe. In contrast, most of the interactions between Anne and Frederick are indirect and even obscure, but all of them are true. This is the basis of beauty in *Persuasion*. To be beautiful, it must first be true.

The Sense and Sensibility

From Anne’s reaction to reports from others, we not only see her sense but also find traces of her sensibility in her reaction to those reports, which is also part of the beauty. Whenever Anne hears others’ talk about Frederick, her feelings fluctuate. But she doesn’t resolutely resist these emotional fluctuations. When she realizes that they must meet after a week, she does not require herself to remain self-possessed all along the way. “She began to wish that she could feel secure even for a week” (Austen, 1995, p. 36). In a weaker tone, Austen shows that Anne accepts that sometimes emotions may get the better of her, though she tries to control her feelings.

But Anne’s emotions only release within reasonable bounds, as seen from her reaction to Mary’s report. “Captain Wentworth is not very gallant by you, Anne... he said, ‘You were so altered he should not have known you again’” (Austen, 1995, p. 41); she concluded Frederick’s resentment. This is Frederick’s comment on Anne after their reunion. This retelling at first dwells with Anne, leaving a silent, deep mortification. But later, Anne tries to stop wallowing in sadness, regarding those words as something “of sobering tendency” (Austen, 1995, p. 41). Her different views on the same words reflect a process of emotional management. Anne is seeking a balance between sense and sensibility, manifesting Austen’s softened attitude towards sensibility and Romanticism. This is totally different from what is shown in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Sensibility is not only accepted in *Persuasion*, but also serves as a catalyst for Anne’s happiness. Upon hearing that Frederick has sent a letter, her feelings pounded through her veins, driving her to inquire

whether Frederick loves Louisa in a roundabout way. “This was an opportunity which Anne could not resist” (Austen, 1995, p. 114). As a polite lady, she does not probe into Frederick’s attitude towards Louisa directly, but in an indirect and obscure way, saying, “I hope there is nothing in the style of Captain Wentworth’s letter to make you and Mrs. Croft particularly uneasy” (Austen, 1995, p. 114). And after getting the answer, she regains her poise and self-control, entrusting herself to reason and looking down to “hide her smile” (Austen, 1995, p. 114). Her sense and sensibility alternate with each other. The information Anne gets from this exciting inquiry shows that Frederick does not love Louisa, relieves Anne’s sadness, and serves as a crucial setup for the later mutual confession between Anne and Frederick. In *Persuasion*, sensibility is not a dispensable embellishment, but like the fine grain in the wood.

This is beautiful because the harmony of sense and sensibility could make a man complete. Sense prevents us from being misled by dullness or vanity. And with sensibility, we experience and express feelings, establish emotional connections, and empathize with others. Their combination makes humans’ existence comprehensive and interesting, allowing beauty to manifest itself.

The Love Beyond Reason

The beauty of love is that Anne and Frederick’s love is neither too emotional nor too rational. They rebuild their relationship based on comprehensive mutual understanding. But also, their love is not totally out of reason. Anne loves Frederick not only for his kindness. In Austen’s previous novels, the heroine’s love comes out of reason (Wu, 1993). Take *Mansfield Park* for an instance. The most important reason why Fanny refuses Mr. Crawford is that his behavior is really improper. And she is attracted to Edmund for his kindness, empathy, and humility. Her love originates from her admiration for Edmund.

But Anne’s love goes beyond reason. We can find the proof in Anne’s reaction to Lady Russell’s report about Mr. Elliot. At that time, Anne is deceived by the make-believe of Mr. Elliot and affirms that he is clearly a man of principle. In other words, Mr. Elliot, in Anne’s eyes, has everything he should have to be the hero in Austen’s previous works. But things do not go like that. Lady Russell retells Mr. Elliot’s praise for Anne. He regards Anne as “a most extraordinary young woman” (Austen, 1995, p. 105). Lady Russell also points out his intention to pursue Anne. Anne “could not be given to understand” (Austen, 1995, p. 105) those highly agreeable compliments before. But her reaction was unexpectedly bland. She “made no violent exclamations” (Austen, 1995, p. 105) and only shook her head with a smile. This composed, decent action, on the one hand, accords with Anne’s civilization; on the other hand, it forms a comparison with Anne’s reaction when learning Frederick’s remark about her. Her emotions toward Frederick are deep, complicated, and finally composed by reason. But when it comes to Mr. Elliot, reason gets the better of her, and there is hardly a trace of sensibility.

This comparison shows that in her love for Frederick, Anne’s sensibility makes a difference. We can go deeper in our analysis of Anne’s remark about Mr. Elliot. When she explains why Mr. Elliot would not be her lover, she mentions that “she could not be satisfied that she really knew his character” (Austen, 1995, p. 106). Mr. Elliot is sensible, but this is not enough for Anne to fall in love with him. She is not content with merely ensuring that her lover has a good personality; she also hopes his character, or in other words, disposition, matches her preferences (Wu, 1993). “Mr. Elliot was rational, discreet, polished, – but he was not open” (Austen, 1995, p. 106). She not only relies on rational judgment to choose her true love, but also takes into account her emotional preferences, in which sensibility plays an important role. Perhaps Austen’s intention of portraying Mr. Elliot as an extremely skilled dissembler who does not reveal any flaws in public is to emphasize that Anne’s choice of a lover is not just based on reason, but also on character. Only when

there are two gentlemen with equally excellent manners can the function of Anne's feelings or sensibility be highlighted. This is also what makes this novel special. Even when Anne believes that someone else's manners could be compared to Frederick's, she still firmly loves Frederick. That is the beauty here. Anne loves a certain person, Frederick, rather than a personality, for example, integrity. This is the unique love of both sense and sensibility.

Overhearing

The Development of Their Relationship

Overhearing is another type of indirect communication that happens frequently between Anne and Frederick. Anne's overhearing plays a subtle role in bringing them closer. During their walk from Upper cross to Winthrop, Anne has a very profound eavesdropping experience. Anne is sitting on her own behind the hedgerow, solitary among a group of people. At that time, she is unexpectedly "in the middle of some eager speech" (Austen, 1995, p. 86), overhearing Frederick's conversation with Louisa Musgrove. During their talk, Frederick expresses his personality preference, praising the firmness of Louisa. According to Bystydzińska (2018), Frederick here implicitly compares Louisa with Anne. The two ladies have quite different personalities. One is talkative and not easily persuaded, while another is reticent and was once successfully persuaded by Lady Russell (Bystydzińska, 2018). He concludes that "the scene shows how inadequate overhearing may be."

But from another perspective, this scene promotes the development of Anne and Frederick's relationship. Frederick's words clarify his attitude toward Anne. On the one hand, Frederick resented Anne for breaking off their engagement, regarding her as weak, submissive, and indecisive. On the other hand, he showed unexpected concern and curiosity towards her. To establish an intimate relationship with someone, it is essential to clarify their attitudes toward each other. In this sense, this overhearing is an important step in rebuilding the relationship between Anne and Frederick.

The next important instance of overhearing is more open. It happens after the accident in which Louisa trembled. Anne and Frederick were in the same carriage on their way back. Anne sits in, hearing Frederick's conversation with Henrietta. Frederick felt guilty and blamed himself for Louisa's injury, regretting not stopping her. Frederick shouted, "But so eager and so resolute! Dear, sweet Louisa!" Frederick used to think that firmness would bring "the universal felicity and advantage" (Austen, 1995, p. 76). Thus, he thinks Anne has a character of cowardice and resents her. But the resolute Louisa has got injured from her insistence. From his words, Anne perceives the change in Frederick. She presumes that now he could realize that "a persuadable temper might sometimes be as much in favor of happiness, as a very resolute character" (Austen, 1995, p. 79). This implies that Anne thinks Frederick now understands the choice made by her eight years ago a little more. This overhearing promotes their mutual understanding.

The beauty here lies in that though the conversations Anne overheard do not directly connect with Anne, Anne involves herself in her reflection. Both conversations here are seemingly only about Louisa, but in fact they contain Anne, contrary to Louisa. This is because Frederick actually loves Anne. And Anne gets this because of her familiarity with Frederick. Therefore, his step-by-step deepening understanding of Anne was not lost on Anne, which lays the groundwork for their confession to each other. This highly mutual understanding is very beautiful.

Self-Persuasion

Overhearing sometimes inspires self-persuasion, as seen in Anne's reaction to the conversation between Mrs. Croft and Mrs. Musgrove. They share opinions on uncertain engagement. Mrs. Croft holds that an uncertain engagement that may be long is "very unsafe and unwise" (Austen, 1995, p. 154). This perspective has an impact on both Frederick and Anne. Anne "felt its application to herself." And as for Frederick, his "pen ceased to move, his head was raised, pausing" (Austen, 1995, p. 154). It is unclear what Frederick's attitude is to these words because, even in the end, "he was not obliged to say that he believed her to have been right in originally dividing them" (Austen, 1995, p. 177). But Anne's reaction shows the process of self-persuasion, that is she gets inspiration from overhearing.

Different from persuasion, self-persuasion works by words unintended for the listener. Since the speaker has no intention of persuading the listener, whether to follow the persuasion or not is totally decided by the listener. Therefore, Anne is persuaded on her own initiative. Mrs. Croft's view is, of course, instructive, but Anne's subjectivity plays a more important role. This also implies her attitude towards Lady Russell's persuasion, according to what she told Frederick in their final conversation. "I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend" (Austen, 1995, p.164). Anne's rationality and maturity are fully demonstrated in this. She considers marriage comprehensively, rather than being blinded by infatuation.

This self-persuasion surpasses persuasion in that it places no blame on the speaker. In comparison, Lady Russell's persuasion, a kind of direct communication, has caused Frederick's resentment, "feeling himself ill-used by so forced a relinquishment" (Austen, 1995, p. 19). And he says, "there are hopes of her being forgiven in time" (Austen, 1995, p. 164) at the end of the novel, implying he still blames her. But as to self-persuasion, speakers can never be blamed for their impact on others because they never mean to give persuasion. Therefore, even though Mrs. Croft's words also indicate that Anne and Frederick's engagement is improper and this perspective also has an impact on Anne, Frederick cannot blame her for it.

Anne's speech also works on Frederick as a contributor to self-persuasion. When Anne talks with Captain Harville about the nature of men and women, Frederick is totally attracted, as seen from his pen falling down. Though he disagrees that "man forgets sooner than woman" (Austen, 1995, p. 158), he gets Anne's emphasis on constancy and sincerity, which speaks for her character. His spontaneous acceptance deepens his understanding and identification with Anne and promotes his efforts to rebuild an intimate relationship with her.

Frederick's self-persuasion shows that he takes the initiative in repairing relations. The listener's self-persuasion shows his agreement with the speaker's viewpoint, which inherently includes the listener's own willingness. Frederick himself desires to win Anne's affection and therefore pays such close attention to her. Then he is persuaded by Anne's conversation with others, seeing her virtues and his own past limitations. Seen from this self-persuasion, Frederick has a more proactive attitude towards Anne than a passive and indifferent one. In comparison, in the year eight, after making a large fortune, Frederick "returned to England, with a few thousand pounds, and was posted into the Laconia" (Austen, 1995, p.164). He could have written to Anne then, and Anne would renew their engagement. But he "was too proud" (Austen, 1995, p. 164) to ask proactively. But eight years later, Frederick is more mature and truly understands Anne's character. Now, he expresses his love for Anne positively.

Self-persuasion, as another interpretation of the title "Persuasion," emphasizes the subjectivity of listeners. It explains the psychological changes of Anne and Frederick, contributes to the achievement of maturation, mutual understanding, and perfect love, and is therefore considered as the most beautiful part of the novel.

Conclusion

As indirect communication happens, the psychological distance between Anne and Frederick continues to diminish. In *Persuasion*, indirect communication mainly involves overhearing and reports from others. Through comparing Mr. Elliot's direct communication with others with Lady Russell's report about him, Austen's doubt about direct communication is expressed and the beauty of truth manifests itself. And then Anne's positive inquiry about Frederick Wentworth shows her sensibility. She does not totally resist her emotions. She allows her feelings to flow within rational bounds. This combination is innovatively beautiful. Her different reactions to reports about Mr. Elliot's and Frederick's remarks on her lead to the conclusion that her love originates not only from reason, but also from emotions. This is truly the love of a person, beautifully.

As for overhearing, it is a tool for Anne to learn Frederick's attitude towards her. Though the conversations she overheard do not relate to Anne, her keen insight allows her to deduce the change in Frederick's attitude towards her. Overhearing here is beautiful for deepening their mutual understanding. Overhearing can also function as self-persuasion. Anne's reaction to Mrs. Croft's words and Frederick's reaction to Anne's words, all show that they are persuaded by those unintended words. Comparing self-persuasion and persuasion, we can conclude that self-persuasion puts the initiative in listeners' hands and so will not make speakers to be blamed. This delicate plot contributes to the charming climax. Those factors of beauty together make indirect communication an indispensable and beautiful part of *Persuasion*.

References

- Abd-Rabbo, M. Zalloum, G., & Nemrawi, Z. (2023). Decolonizing Imperialist discourse in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 45(3), 229-243.
- Austen, J. (1995). *Persuasion*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Azerêdo, G. (2021). Intermediality, intertextuality and parody: Resonances of Jane Austen in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. *Ilha Do Desterro-A Journal of English Language Literatures in English and Cultural Studies*, 74(1), 41-59.
- Bystydzińska, G. (2018). From nobody to somebody: Romantic epistemology in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. *Humanities*, 11(4), 93-103.
- Chen, Y. (2022). Embodied emotional cognition and emotional strategy in *Persuasion*. *Foreign Literature*, 295(2), 156-168.
- Guan, H. (2022). The paradox of self-focus and altruism in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*: An emotion cognition perspective. *Foreign Languages and Cultures*, 6(3), 32-40.
- Kopajtic, L. (2022). 'Now, how were his sentiments to be read?': Imagination and discernment in Austen's *Persuasion*. *Philosophy and Literature*, 46(2), 280-300.
- Kudish, A. (2016). Emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain: Affective contradiction in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. *The Explicator*, 74(2), 120-124.
- Lin, W. (2000). A brief discussion of *Persuasion*. *Foreign Language and Literature Studies*, (1), 112-118.
- Quinn, M. (2017). The sensation of language in Austen's *Persuasion*. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 30(2), 243-263.

- Warhol-Down, R. (2010). Feminist theory/practice: Narration, story-world, and perspective in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. *Foreign Literature Studies*, 32(4), 51-59.
- Woolf, V. (2002). *The common reader first series*. Boston: Mariner Books.
- Wu, J. (1993). On Austen and her novels. *Foreign Literature*, (2), 79-85.

Writing Emotions in the Mother-Daughter Relationship: Annie Ernaux's *A Woman's Story*

Zhixin Yuan, Jia Zhao*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 1499128568@qq.com

[Abstract] *A Woman's Story* is a novel written by the contemporary French author Annie Ernaux, based on her own experiences with her mother. Although the story depicts ordinary aspects of daily life between a mother and daughter, upon closer examination, beneath the surface of these commonplace personal emotions lie profound gender and class underpinnings. This paper discusses the emotions displayed by the mother and daughter on different occasions and delves into the underlying reasons for these emotions.

[Keywords] Annie Ernaux; *A Woman's Story*; emotions; mother-daughter relationship

Introduction

French author Annie Ernaux, the 2022 Nobel Prize laureate for Literature, intricately weaves her own life experience into her work. Often assuming the roles of both narrator and protagonist, she uses concise and powerful language to depict her experiences as a daughter, wife, and mother. Her writing highlights the collective aspect of shared experience, reflecting on the current state of society and the times. Everything she portrays originates from everyday life, including emotions. There are no elaborate plots or designs, yet she has the remarkable ability to profoundly draw out the significant and universal implications of common emotions. This characteristic further enhances the charm of her works, enabling them to evoke collective emotions and promoting their widespread acceptance and recognition.

Numerous studies have been devoted to Ernaux and her work *A Woman's Story*. However, most of the research focuses on feminist perspectives, as well as collective and sociological aspects. Only a limited number of works specifically have explored emotions in Ernaux's literary creations. Notably, Havercoft (2005) examined the themes of shame and betrayal. Day (2007) investigated the interdependence of shame and desire in Ernaux's writing. Charpentier (2009) considered social shame as an expression of the class ethos of transgressors. For *A Woman's Story*, limited comments on this topic are scattered throughout a number of articles. Liliane Lazar (1999) highlighted the narrator's intention to repent for repressed negative feelings towards her mother since adolescence, such as intense hatred and contempt, examining the mother-daughter relationship from a broader perspective. E. Nicole Meyer (2002) examined different manifestations of voice and how they contribute to the construction of the narrator's identity, emphasizing the inseparable bond between mother and daughter and their connection to the community of women. Toutouchian (2014) observed that the novel is littered with the narrator's emotions and examines the level of subjectivity in the narrative by analyzing the text.

On the whole, researchers mostly focused their studies on shame while other emotions are seldom systematically explored and their role in literature is rarely examined in depth. Therefore, to provide a more comprehensive analysis, this paper thoroughly examines at *A Woman's Story*, delving into the complex emotions between mother and daughter.

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: zhaojia1983@zju.edu.cn

Intimacy and Emotional No-Go Zone in the Early Mother-Daughter Relationship

The first phase of the mother-daughter relationship extends from the birth of the daughter to her twelfth year – just before adolescence – according to Erik H. Erikson’s theory. During this period, the mother and daughter’s expressions of affection show how close they are to one another. This intimacy is elevated to the verge of fusion by their mutual identification. But, the disclosure of a secret reveals an unspoken emotional repression between the mother and the daughter, which serves as an emotional no-go area for them both. The silence that the mother and daughter share betrays this repression and calls into doubt the stability of their relationship.

During this phase, mutual identification underlies the intimacy of the mother-daughter relationship. The mother projects her desires onto her daughter, while the daughter looks up to her mother with admiration. The birth of a daughter enables the mother to “solve some of her earlier problems” (Freud, 2014, p. 124). By providing her daughter with everything she never had, the mother finds solace from the childhood traumas inflicted by poverty. The mother aspires to a life in a different social class; however, due to economic constraints, she leaves school early to work, thereby missing the opportunity to alter her destiny through education. Consequently, she aims to provide her daughter with the best possible education, in the hope that her daughter can access a higher world through knowledge. The mother yearns to provide her daughter with all the things she never had and anticipates that her daughter will fulfill her own unmet wishes.

For the daughter, her mother represents the first and most intimate adult of the same sex. Naturally, she regards her mother as a role model and is drawn to the qualities her mother exhibits. Her mother’s body even inspires fantasies about her own future adult body, as she once thought, “I didn’t miss a thing about her body. At that time, I thought that when I grew up, I would become her” (Ernaux, 1987, p. 46). Nonetheless, some of her mother’s actions subtly make the daughter aware of the shame associated with the female body, such as storing bloodied menstrual pads in the attic corner. Furthermore, her mother’s pursuit of a personal career and her dominant role within the family challenge traditional gender roles. The mother’s determination and boldness subvert societal gender expectations, and through her, the daughter recognizes her own potential for the future, which could also be liberated from the gender expectations imposed by society.

It is worth noting that before delving into the narrative of the mother and daughter, the author introduces the presence of another little girl who tragically succumbed to diphtheria. This girl is, in fact, the mother’s first child and the narrator’s sister, despite the fact that they never crossed paths. While her presence is briefly referenced within the narrative, it is in essence a family secret shrouded in silence – a topic no one dares to discuss. Nevertheless, silence does not mean absence, instead it hints at a profound void. The deceased elder daughter hovers like a spectral presence, casting a subtle yet undeniable shadow over their relationship. For the mother, the birth of her first child marked a unique and transformative experience becoming a parent, ushering in a new realm of responsibilities. The moments she shared with this first child are cherished and indelible, impossible to replicate. The untimely loss of her first daughter constitutes an enduring source of sorrow and bereavement. The narrator, born subsequent to this tragedy, can be perceived as a form of compensation, an attempt to fill the void left by the departed daughter, and an emblem of renewed life and hope for the mother.

However, the narrator finds herself in a seemingly futile competition with the sister she never had the chance to know. Even her most ardent efforts fail to secure her as the foremost figure in her mother’s affections. She grapples with conflicting emotions, wavering between “the pride of having survived and the guilt” (Ernaux, 2011, pp. 34-35) of occupying the position intended for another. Moreover, the revelation

of the existence of this other daughter occurs by accident, and these emotions are subsequently repressed in an effort to safeguard the family secret. The mother's displays of affection and tenderness thus take on a deceiving veneer, leaving the narrator feeling deceived and humiliated. The presence of the deceased first daughter disrupts the intimacy within their relationship, creating a dissonance that contributes to an increase in potential conflict between the mother and the daughter.

Shame and Guilt in the Midterm Mother-Daughter Relationship

The period of time from the daughter's entry into adolescence until she truly becomes independent and begins her own family defines the second stage of the mother-daughter relationship. The mother becomes more controlling of her adolescent daughter due to the shame attached to femininity and the mismatch in perceptions – which makes the narrator increasingly intolerant. Simultaneously, she seeks to escape her mother's coarseness because she feels ashamed after interacting with the bourgeois class. By virtue of her stellar academic achievements, the daughter succeeds in moving up the social ladder and adopting a more refined way of living. However, the mother feels inferior and ashamed after her daughter lets her finally experience the world that she had always desired. Therefore, the mother begins to look up to her daughter, she feels compelled to give of herself in order to strengthen their bond. The daughter feels guilty because of this disparity in status and believes she has betrayed her mother.

The first factor is the impact of women's sexual shame. Starting with the daughter's adolescence, the mother becomes concerned about her daughter's growth, particularly with regard to her physical and sexual development. Tension results from the daughter's menstruation, which represents her change from a young girl to an adult woman. Their awkward silence about the topic subtly conveys a shame that is unique to women. The mother, for whom "the very idea of freedom for girls did not exist except in terms of damnation" (Ernaux, 1987, p. 61), sees girls' freedom as a recipe for disaster. She is also concerned that her daughter may engage in sexual behavior. The possibility of the daughter having sexual relations and becoming pregnant is a source of anxiety for the mother because she knows the degradation of a woman's honor that would entail. The mother fears that her daughter will go astray and increasingly interferes with her behavior. For example, she interferes with her daughters' social activities and dressing: "until I was eighteen, almost all our arguments revolved around the ban on going out and the choice of clothes" (Ernaux, 1987, p. 61). This phenomenon represents gendered shame, where shame serves "as a mechanism of surveillance and policing of gender binarism in maintaining idealized, 'respectable' femininity" (Shefer, & Munt, 2019, p. 146). It is transmitted through the mother's imposition of everyday norms and regulations on her daughter, highlighting the pervasive nature of shame in women's everyday experiences. This kind of interference limits the daughter's freedom and gives the impression of being too conservative and autocratic. It is normal for the daughter to have her own freedom and make her own decisions. This causes intolerance and resentment in the daughter, who no longer wants such a troublesome mother, "sometimes I imagined that her death would have done nothing for me" (Ernaux, 1987, p. 62). Feelings of shame in the construction of the feminine are the product of the repression of female sexuality and become a form of emotional violence transmitted from mother to daughter. In the form of "overly threatening warnings from the mother" (Argant-Le Claire, 2003, p. 132), this provokes a lack of understanding and a conflict of perceptions leading to the breakdown of the mother-daughter relationship.

The desire to belong to the upper class creates a shared inferiority complex between the mother and the daughter, giving rise to feelings of shame and guilt within their relationship. During this time, the mother is no longer a role model for her daughter. Instead, she has become the person the daughter wants to distance

herself from. Through education, the daughter gets closer and closer to the social elite and begins to identify with them. School and home thus become two different worlds. At school, the girl socializes with her petty-bourgeois classmates. She sees their sweet, elegant mothers and thinks that is how it should be. “The mother figure becomes an element of comparison which, in spite of itself, contains the need to adopt, unwillingly, another image of motherhood... The mother’s condition, determined by a physique that seems to indicate a social class, cannot evolve towards the upper class dreamed of by the narrator” (El Sakezli, 2013, p. 70). Furthermore, upon the daughter’s return to her home, she is reminded of the class divide by her mother’s behavior. Her mother exhibits qualities such as rudeness, lack of sophistication, and education, which are typically associated with lower classes, showcasing the daughter’s own social background. Hence, it is unsurprising that the daughter’s primary goal is to leave. Even after getting married, she does not desire her mother’s company, viewing her as far back as her life before marriage. As the daughter gains independence and starts her own family, she attains a higher social status, broadening her perspective and knowledge, leading to a way of life significantly distinct from that of her mother, who has lived in a comparatively restricted setting. This, in turn, exacerbates the difficulties in their relationship.

The mother refuses to be judged solely on her humble background and yearns for recognition and respect akin to that of the upper classes. Yet, upon relocating to her daughter’s residence and immersing herself in a new world, she experiences a sense of shame towards her own social class. Consequently, she endeavors to conceal her identity by assimilating with the norms and knowledge of the higher echelons, for instance, by sipping tea and reading newspapers. However, the mother recognizes these actions don’t make much of a difference and that her social background brings her shame. This affects the mother-daughter relationship, causing the mother to feel inferior and unjustly distancing herself from her daughter, fearing that she won’t be loved for who she truly is. She attempts to appease her daughter by providing financial support and tending to the family in fear of being rejected when such support is no longer possible. The daughter’s climb up the social ladder has not provided the happiness her mother anticipated. Though the mother’s more sophisticated way of life might be desirable to others and satisfying to her ego to some degree, it has not assuaged her inner discontent. Rather, it has caused her concern and apprehension. Consequently, she desires to be of service to her daughter, to establish her value, and to gain validation in this unfamiliar existence. The shame experienced by the mother generates a gap between the two ladies and influences her communication with her daughter. The daughter’s delayed reaction towards her mother’s emotions clearly indicates the extent of the gap between them.

Additionally, the daughter feels shame predominantly towards herself. By pursuing higher education and starting her own family, the daughter now lives a vastly different life from her mother’s. Although the mother has contributed to the daughter’s social advancement, it is time for her to step aside. The daughter cannot genuinely share her accomplishments with her mother, resulting in a sense of betrayal and guilt rather than a “celebration of dominance and superiority” (Peng, 2015, p. 46). Therefore, the daughter experiences uneasiness in the new environment, sensing that she has abandoned her origins and feeling a dual shame towards her social class and herself. She acknowledges her ingratitude and struggles with desires for social success and devotion to her mother.

Emotional Impact of Illness and Death in the Late Mother-Daughter Relationship

The mother-daughter relationship enters its final stage with the onset of the mother’s illness. With aging and the diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease, the mother’s cognitive abilities and behavior are impacted. Her emotional functioning declines and the sole emotion that persists is accompanied by a profound class stigma

that endures for an extended period. As the mother's condition deteriorates, she gradually becomes unresponsive and the complex emotions of shame and other feelings that she has carried with her throughout her life fade away. The mother displays a primitive side that is difficult to reconcile and accept. The death of the mother leaves the daughter even more traumatized in ways that are difficult to articulate.

The deterioration of her mother's memory is a major symptom of Alzheimer's disease. Gradually, she loses her memory, including recognition of previously familiar objects and individuals. Throughout this process, she experiences a range of negative and divisive emotions, as observed, "she had no other feelings but anger and suspicion" (Ernaux, 1989, p. 90). This decline in memory is accompanied by a loss of subjectivity, a sense of dislocation, and disconnection. In response, she frantically searches for objects she cannot locate, which reflects her profound anxiety about abandonment and uncertainty. She starts to forget the names of her loved ones and even fails to recognize her own daughter. This memory loss causes a rift in the emotional bond between her and her daughter, leading to the end of her role as a mother. The mother progressively regresses to the past, dwelling on memories of poverty and fear from her early days. It is not coincidental that her illness plunged her into these memories. The mother endures a lifetime of emotional torment as memories linger. Peace of mind proved elusive. Her heart harbors resentment towards class inequality, a harbinger that lingers all her days. The disease reveals her vulnerability; her facade torn away.

As her condition deteriorates, the mother becomes oblivious to her conduct and forgets everything. She discards the previous shame linked to social inequality and no longer harbors any distrust or resentment towards anything. There is no strong emotional reaction to anything, and as a consequence, she is induced to surrender her resistance to the disease and the inequities of life, becoming apathetic. "Alzheimer's is a disease that affects the narrator's mother not only in her memory but also in her authority and dignity as a mother" (El Sakezli, 2013, p. 75). The mother's indifference is the irreversible degeneration caused by the disease, an emotional apathy, and also reflects "an executive function" (Heilman, & Nadeau, 2022, p. 102) of her intention. She has been extinguished in every sense of the word, becoming a child dependent on others for survival – or a wild being without social constraints. The mother, who was once proud and concerned about her appearance and others' opinions, is now vulnerable and beaten down. The disease provides the daughter with an entirely new viewpoint of her mother, which proves challenging to accept. She experiences helplessness and seeks to evade reality, as she cannot come to terms with the utter collapse of her mother's once impregnable image.

The daughter experiences great anguish after her mother's passing. The impersonal and mechanical handling of the situation heightens her sorrow, as she recognizes that the world carries on disregarding her pain. She receives the news of her mother's death by phone rather than being present in person. Following this, she has to manage multiple hospital procedures. This leads to difficulties in expressing and managing her emotions. The funeral rites provide some solace, enabling the daughter to externalize and express her pain; nevertheless, the sorrow for her mother's demise remains profound. Memory plays a crucial part in re-establishing connections with those we have lost. Given the extensive time and experiences shared between a mother and daughter, every aspect of the mother is etched in the daughter's memory. This creates the illusion for the narrator that her mother is still invisibly alive somewhere, like at a stage in her past life: "this sensation, where my mother's illusory presence is stronger than her real absence, is undoubtedly the first form of forgetting" (Ernaux, 1989, p. 104). By momentarily forgetting about death, the narrator seems to still be the child who has not yet lost her mother. This could partially prevent the narrator from becoming overly consumed by sadness, but it is not a final solution. The mother's memory persists, leaving the daughter to confront reality alone. The false sense of comfort in the face of realities amplify feelings of

loneliness and frustration that are hard to endure, “I was reliving that Sunday when she was alive... then Monday, when she was dead. I couldn’t reconcile the two days” (Ernaux, 1989, p. 103). In addition, the mother is not just a maternal figure but also a constituent of the narrator’s being, forging a bond to her roots. The absence of the mother renders the daughter without roots and in a perpetual state of loneliness. The exile exacerbates the daughter’s sense of solitude.

Conclusion

This article analyzes the emotions portrayed in the work from gender and societal perspectives. The initial focus is on the affectionate relationship between a mother and daughter, where they mutually project themselves. However, the presence of another daughter who died early creates an emotional barrier for the mother and daughter, resulting in complex emotions for them both. The concept of female sexual shame is analyzed within a family setting, as the daughter progresses towards womanhood. Upon achieving upward social mobility, the daughter experiences shame when discovering her mother’s lower-class traits. As the daughter establishes herself in a new social circle, her mother is also encompassed in a sense of shame. Eventually, the daughter’s recognition of her betrayal of her mother and her former social class elicits feelings of guilt. Further analysis explores the enduring emotions of the mother during her later years, especially in the face of illness. It also delves into the daughter’s feelings of powerlessness, pain, and loneliness as she watches her mother gradually weaken and eventually pass away.

A Woman’s Story serves as a microcosm, effectively illustrating how personal narratives of emotional experiences relate to broader themes. Examining this work through an emotional lens ties personal experiences to broader societal issues, making abstract topics more tangible and concrete. It reinstates the communal aspect to individual narratives and enhances their significance and context.

References

- Argant Le Claire, M.-C. (2003). Violence insidieuse dans la relation mère-fille », *Filigrane*, 12(1), 2003, 128-143.
- Charpentier, I. (2009). Les réceptions “ordinaires” d’une écriture de la honte sociale: Les lecteurs d’Annie Ernaux. *Idées économiques et sociales*, 155(1), 19-25.
- Day, L. (2007). *Writing shame and desire: The work of Annie Ernaux*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- El Sakezli, O. (2013). Recherche identitaire et mémoire collective dans l’œuvre d’Annie Ernaux. [Doctor Thesis, François Rabelais University].
- Ernaux, A. (1989). *Une femme*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Ernaux, A. (2011). *L’autre fille*. Paris: Nil édition.
- Freud, I. (2014). Electra vs Oedipus: The drama of the mother-daughter relationship. Lin X.-Y. (Trans.) Guilin: Lijiang Publishing House.
- Havercoft, B. (2005). Dire l’indicible: Trauma et honte chez Annie Ernaux. *Roman 20-50*, 40(2), 119-132.
- Heilman, K. M., & Nadeau, S. E. (2022). Emotional and neuropsychiatric disorders associated with Alzheimer’s disease. *Neurotherapeutics*, 19, 99-116.
- Lazar, L. (1999). A la recherche de la mère: Simone de Beauvoir et Annie Ernaux. *Simone de Beauvoir Studies*, 16, 123-134.
- Meyer, N.-E. (2002). Voicing childhood: Remembering the mother in Annie Ernaux’s autobiographies. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 35(2), 33-40.

- Peng, Y.-Y. (2015). Du pacte intime à la transcendance collective: Sur l'auto-socio-biographie d'Annie Ernaux [Doctor Thesis, Wuhan University].
- Shefer, T., & Munt, S. R. (2019). A feminist politics of shame: Shame and its contested possibilities. *Feminism & Psychology, 29*(2), 145-156.
- Toutouchian, F., & Nassehi, Z. (2014). Une Femme d'Annie Ernaux: De la subjectivité d'une écriture objective. *Études de Langue et Littérature Françaises, 5*(1), 91-110.

The Wife of Bath's Feminist Ideas: Limitations and Rebellions

Zhiyue Zhang¹, Lian Zhang

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3210102629@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] There have been many interpretations of the Wife of Bath in *Canterbury Tales*, especially focused on her marital relationships. This article analyzes the Wife of Bath's perspectives on gender and her rebellious practices. The Wife of Bath is a secular woman. Her feminist awareness is mainly reflected in her rebellious manner towards social norms and her role as a "female avenger" who breaks free from the restrictions on women by imitating the patriarchal system. However, since her feminist thought is not separated from the misogynistic context of the time, her practice of striving for freedom is, in fact, a way of othering and distinguishing herself from "the common woman". Besides, her feminist ideas are constrained to the field of marriage, which leads to the inimitability of her acts in the real world.

[Keywords] misogyny; *Canterbury Tales*; the Wife of Bath; feminism

Introduction

Geoffrey Chaucer is one of the greatest authors in the history of English literature. Early studies and then missions to continental European countries endowed Chaucer with extraordinary language creativity. At the same time, realism and humanity are also commonly spotted in his works, reflecting the influence of the Italian Renaissance. *The Canterbury Tales*, which appears in the form of story sets with an all-encompassing portrayal of British society of his era, is often viewed as his most prominent work. As there are around 30 main characters in the book, the narrative is clearly layered, varying ingeniously to mold vivid characters, among which the Wife of Bath is the most discussed one.

Alison, also called the Wife of Bath, is often regarded as "one of the most complex" personalities "among all the characters of Medieval English Literature" (Masi, 2005, p. 127). As an unusual female character in literature of the Middle Ages, the Wife of Bath has been frequently involved in gender studies. Many scholars notice her rebellious trait, focusing on her attitude towards the misogynist environment. Dinshaw (1990, p. 67) takes Alison as "an authentic practiser of feminism", highly affirming her bravery in mimicking the patriarchal system to embrace female desire. Murtaugh (1998) also interprets Wife of Bath from the perspective of female power, arguing that both Alison and the old lady in Alison's tale contribute to the moral regeneration of men by taking revenge, which in itself refutes the anti-feminist tradition. Not just concerning Chaucer's writing, the article *Anti-antifeminism in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales* compares the work with other medieval fabliaux, concluding that the narration of Alison is a "revolutionary and almost heretical" reply to the antifeminist traditions (Zelinka, 2013, p. 275). And in 2019, Lipton drew the idea of contract and legal power from Alison's Tale. Seeing the Tale as "a series of interlocking contracts that drive the plot", the author takes the tale of the knight as an inspiration for "tactical feminist activism" instead of gender equity, stressing the practicability of legal practices to facilitate change (Lipton, 2019, pp. 342, 351).

However, different feminist perspectives exist as well. As feminist studies have been attached much importance to this work since the last century, there have appeared varied interpretations of the marital

¹Email address: 3210102629@zju.edu.cn

and sexual relationships in the text. Hansen (1992, p. 35), taking note of the paradoxical behaviors and discourse of the Wife of Bath, affirms that she is actually “a feminine monstrosity” produced from masculine imagination. Therefore, her rebellion, especially the so-called fight against patriarchy, is ineffective and superficial. Ou (2010) also points out that order and Christian righteousness were still Chaucer’s guiding principles apart from the description of secular life and ordinary people, which leads to the limitations of Alison’s feminist understandings.

Other critics emphasize the ambivalence of Chaucer’s attitude towards women, endorsing the androgynous elements of the Wife of Bath. Zhang (2010) applies Lacanian Androgyny to show the Wife’s sense of feminist self and her search for the other half – masculinity. The complex nature of the Wife’s view on women presents both Chaucer’s acceptance of the literary tradition and his observation of the emerging bourgeois lifestyle. Wang (2018) also argues that contradiction is the most important feature of Chaucer’s attitude towards intersexual relations. The author stresses Chaucer’s establishment of women’s subjectivity, rebellion against medieval marriage, and pursuit of their happiness while acknowledging his anti-feminist tendency and ignorance of female discourse.

Although critics have made fruitful studies on the Wife of Bath from different aspects, the rich connotations and deep meaning of Alison’s Prologue and Tale can still be explored in different ways. Most of the previous studies either point out the limitations of the Wife of Bath or explain her view from Chaucer’s experiences. Few have delved into the mechanism of Alison’s misogyny, that is, the insufficiencies of her feminist tenets. What exactly is Alison’s view on gender? Why does she still turn out to be a controversial feminist, while being so determined to preserve female values? This article aims to delve into the image of Alison, her marital perspectives, and her rebellious behavior to see the strengths and limitations of her feminist ideas, especially her misunderstandings, and try to extract inspiration for feminist practices.

The Image of the Wife of Bath

A Secular Woman

Unlike most medieval people who adhered to religion and asceticism, the Wife of Bath is more like a secular woman – who is vain, pompous, talkative, and lustful. In the General Prologue, the narrator’s overall description of her contains irony: Alison is generalized as a “worthy woman al hir lyve”, while she has been married five times, which is completely at odds with Christian chastity (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 38, 461). In addition, she is fond of flashy and bright clothes, wearing a head covering that seems to weigh ten tons and having bright red socks on her feet. She also confesses to toying with several husbands and finding ways to get their possessions, which shows her pursuit of material life and worldly pleasures.

In the prologue, the Wife of Bath’s image is accentuated by the Prioress who, interestingly, is also referred to as a woman with “digne of reverence”, though this one is ironic as well (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 22, 141). Chaucer presents two completely opposite images of women through these two female characters. The hypocritical Prioress is, on the surface, a perfect Christian lady. She has good manners, a soft heart, and a preoccupation with holy religious endeavors. Although Chaucer is sarcastic about her superficiality, the image she strives to create is pure, pious, and gentle. The Wife of Bath, however, is ill-mannered and complacent, being in complete opposition to this ideal image. And while the Prioress pursues satisfaction in her curtsy, Alison is keen on the satisfaction of desire. The Prioress symbolizes the paradigmatic

woman in the patriarchal society, while Alison corrupts public morals. Therefore, Alison's secular image runs counter to Christian asceticism and is a counter-example in the medieval patriarchal context.

Self-Consciousness and Rebellion

As the counter-example of the time, Alison's secular image embodies rebellion against the established patriarchal order, which is reflected mainly in her strong self-awareness. The medieval patriarchal cultural tradition equated women with passivity and subservience. The patriarchal symbolic system views women as lacking desire, placing them in the position of the object of desire rather than the subject (He, 2006, p. 33). Chastity, one of the most valuable virtues for women, was not even controlled by them. Instead, it belonged to their fathers and husbands in the name of protection. Alison, however, retains her personal reflection even if she grows up in Christian culture. She uses biblical examples to make a rational and logical defense of her desires. She cites Solomon, Abraham, and other biblical figures who are recorded as having many wives to suggest that, since these saints are allowed to have many wives, women's remarriage should not be scorned. When her fifth husband lists the sins of women, Alison is so filled with "wo (woe)" and "pyne (pain)" that she tears up his book (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 332, 787). Disagreeing with women's original evilness, she argues that so many stories about women's sins exist only because they are written by men and that if women had had the chance to write historical books, men's sins would also have been criticized. The rebuttal to her husband reveals her belief that women are always ridiculed because they are deprived of their voice—which then guides her rebellious acts. Therefore, Alison reflects deeply on the dominant views in society, such as the belief that female weakness brought about the Original Sin, and the argument that women's ignorance makes people suffer, as well as questions about the social definition of men and women.

Alison's knight's tale also reflects her feminine consciousness. "Generally speaking, the depiction of love as a form of culture has always been in the perspective of men.", and most chivalric romance is male-centered with the "courtship and crucifixion of knights" being its core (Huizinga, 2008, pp. 77-84). Besides, women are constantly mocked for infidelity, jealousy, and pride in most courtship stories of knights. However, in Alison's tale, King Arthur leaves the knight's life entirely in the hands of the queen. And at the end, the knight also places himself completely at the disposal of his wife. Therefore, it can be seen that Alison is consciously expressing the female's view of love, which has always been ignored. At the same time, Alison's attempt to raise women to the same level as men can also be spotted as she tries to exchange the status of the two sexes in marriage so that men, who are in a dominant position, can also be "dominated". Being the opposite of contemporary archetypes, Alison also bases her secular image on rebellion and challenges to the established patriarchal order.

The Wife of Bath's Gender Perspectives

Gradually Moderated Hatred

The attitude Alison shows towards men changes throughout the story. At first, she harbors a hatred for men, but by the time she marries her fifth husband, Jankin, she finds a more ideal state in marriage. By then, her hostility towards men had been replaced with the expectation of dominating her husband.

In dealing with her previous husbands, Alison acted with a hard heart without compassion. To make them suffer, she falsely accused them of peeking at other women, speaking offensively while getting drunk, and possessing suspicion, voyeurism, and sarcasm over women's love. Even if the husband is innocent, she bites and wails at him like a horse. According to the text, Alison's torture of her husband is

an act of revenge against men. She once points out that her husbands would have been so suspicious of her if she had not accused them first because the idea of spying on wives' whereabouts, suspecting their infidelity, and believing that a beautiful wife must flirt with guys are common views in medieval literature, though her husbands are innocent themselves. Therefore, Alison's spying on her husband is not only out of spite for him, but also out of resentment for the torment women are subject to and her hatred for men.

However, after a big fight with Jankin, Alison slowly comes to reach consensus with him. Although Chaucer's description of this transformation is so vague that it includes just a sentence "after much care and woe", it can be seen from the ending part that Alison is finally in charge of the family's wealth, her husband's words and actions, being in the dominant position in the marriage that Chaucer describes as "maistrie al the soveraynetee" (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 334, 818). She herself also becomes Jankin's beloved wife who treats him just like any other wife does. Therefore, with the realization of her personal dominance, Alison's hatred for men moderates, transforming into the expectation of her husband's carnal desires as she states that she expects "housbondes meke, younge, and fresshe abedde" (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 358, 403). As the ruler of marriage, she gazes at her husband just as men once did at women.

A Misogynistic Conception of Women

Many studies have argued that Alison's success is a major victory for feminism. Some scholars even believe that Alison has physically destroyed the cultural stereotypes and distorted representations of women under patriarchy and misogyny (He, 2006, p. 33). However, this study argues that Alison is not completely free from a misogynistic conception of women.

In fact, Alison acknowledges many of the patriarchal society's stereotypes of women. For example, she admits in her account of deceiving the husband that men are definitely not as good at cheating and swearing as women are. When telling the story of the knight, she argues that women are completely incapable of keeping secrets and are naturally talkative. Although Alison does accuse her husband of being suspicious of her infidelity and rebukes those who associate beautiful women with unfaithfulness, in her Knight's Tale the old woman confesses that beauty and chastity can't co-exist on one woman. According to Huizinga (2008, p. 142), the constant sarcasm about women's weaknesses and the ridicule of women's infidelity and conceit in medieval novels is actually a smokescreen for the male-centered narrative. The acknowledgment of "women's inherited weaknesses" is in fact an acceptance of female stereotypes in a misogynistic context.

The misogyny can be strikingly evident if we look at the knight's experiences – a rapist turns out to live well and be rewarded with a "fair and good" wife (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 356, 385)! At the beginning of "The Knight's Tale", the protagonist rapes a young girl and then is sentenced to death by law. However, many court women intercede for him and give him a chance to live. The ladies' pleading, though perhaps necessary for the development of the story, reflects no sympathy for the suffering of the raped girl. Instead, it empathizes with the knight who commits the crime. "Wo was the knight and sorowfully he syketh" when he receives the queen's question (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 338, 57). The despair of the knight makes the queen seem like an aggressor, while in fact, her question gives him the chance to survive. In "The Knight's Tale", women seem to be unreasonable all the time: the queen seems to ask hard questions; the old woman seems to persecute the knight although she's just demanding that he keep his promise; and, the knight suffers from women's spanking. The story focuses too much on the knight's suffering, and the

context of “the great crucifixion of men” actually takes women as sinners, aggressors, and sources of trouble (Huizinga, 2008, p. 143).

Therefore, although there appears a feminist awakening, Alison fails to examine the image of women itself. She resists parts of the oppression of women, but her idea about the female is not that different from the stereotypical one in society. Just as she herself says, chastity is the “breed of pure whete seed”, and married women should be called “barly breed” (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 298, 142-144).

Feminist Practices of the Wife of Bath

As mentioned above, Alison initially harbors hatred for men and then the hatred slowly eases. Living under patriarchy, her process of lashing out against the marital order encompasses feminist practices. But the way she “rebels” against reality changes as her attitude towards men evolves. A stark shift takes place in her fifth marriage.

The Hatred and the Rebellion

In the first four marriages, Alison appears to be a woman primarily with rebellious thoughts. In this period, she recognizes the transactional nature of marriage and questions the so-called social norms. Speaking of marriage, she argues that “al is for to selle: With empty hand men may non haukes lure”, pointing out that everything has a price, including marriage, and that one has to pay the full price to get it (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 312, 414-415). She also refers several times to “the raunson” her husbands must pay her before they have their lust satisfied (Chaucer, 2006, pp.312, 408-412). Then it can be seen that marriage in her view is essentially a transaction, in which women give up their sexual rights and men pay with wealth and social status. After realizing the nature of marriage, Allison began to fight back with the “full embrace of her own commodification” mainly manifested by making a profit at each degree in the marriage deal (Dinshaw, 1990, p. 118). She spills her guts and cries in order to cause marital pains to men as a part of the nuptial tips, takes as much of her husbands’ wealth as possible, and gets involved in extramarital affairs to take advantage of the other sex.

The Imitation of Patriarchal Frame

By the time she married her fifth husband Jankin, Alison had made the leap from “female identity” to “male identity”, which entails two stages. The first stage of position swapping is determined by wealth. At first, Alison, who has acquired a certain amount of wealth through her previous husbands, achieved a dominant position over Jankin because of her fortune in the fifth marriage, just as her previous husbands had done. She allows Jankin to squander her savings and loves him even though she is often beaten by him because he is young, handsome, and able to satisfy her lust. Therefore, at that point, Allison has taken the role of her previous husbands while Jankin is like what Allison was.

However, after their big fight, their relationship enters the second stage, where Alison gains complete dominion over family property and control over her husband’s words and actions, turning him into her subordinate. Then, she acquires the equivalent of medieval male dominance within the family, making the transition of her identity from a woman in society to “a man”. The knight and the old woman have also made this transition. The tones and contents of the last monologue in *The Knight’s Tale* show a close imitation of typical male ideals: “Jesu Crist us sende / housbondes meek, yonge and fresshe ebedde, / And grace t’overbid hem that we wedde... shorte hir lyves / That wol nat be governed by hir wyves” (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 358, 402-406). If we replace the word “housbondes” with “wyves” in the lines, the monologue will be completely in line with the male-centered values of the time.

From her shift in identity, it can be seen that Alison's feminist practice is mainly about imitating the patriarchal system to build a matriarchal counterpart. Dinshaw (1990, p. 116) argues that Alison, proposes a revision of male-centeredness through her imitation of patriarchal interpretations, striving to view women's desire as a masculine activity to confirm its rationality. It is undeniable that such imitation embodies simple feminist ideology. In mimicking the patriarchal framework and applying misandrous stereotypes to men, the Wife of Bath steps out of the restraints imposed on women by a patriarchal society and elevates women to the same level as men.

Limitations of Alison's Feminism

However, Alison's feminist ideas and actions are manifestly flawed. In the Knight's Tale, the hag cheerfully claims her "maistrie" of her husband (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 356, 380). However, such "mastery" is merely lip service as she swears to obey him in everything "That mighte doom him pleasure or lyking" (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 356, 399-400). The old lady, who gave him the answer and had all the power, gives it up and transforms herself into the ideal woman objectified by masculine fantasy (Hansen, 1992). But why does this happen? What are the flaws of her actions?

Female Misogyny

Alison's feminist thought is flawed due to the presence of misogynistic contexts. While denouncing the injustice of stereotypes around her, Alison identifies with those same misogynistic stereotypes. And here are questions about feminism: is gender discrimination against specific women or is it the belittling of female symbols? Is feminism the resistance of individual women or the efforts of all women? Susan Buckingham-Hatfield (2000, p. 34) defines "patriarchy" as "the systematic, structural and unjustified domination of women by men", highlighting the structural oppression of the female. According to Li Yinhe (2018, pp. 2, 9), unlike men who go through persecution for being a member of certain classes or groups, women may suffer only for being "women", indicating the essence of feminism is to "achieve equality between men and women for all human beings" instead of individuals.

In her book *Misogyny*, Ueno (2015, p. 197) refers to "the misogynous ideas among women", that is, "othering" oneself as the exception to the discrimination of the female. In other words, this kind of misogyny denies the value of the female, while sticking up for several superwomen who are distinguished from the common woman. And the Wife of Bath's feminist practice essentially follows the pattern. She brags a lot about her tricks to dominate men. In the Tale, the queen and the hag are heroines with power or magic, while the nameless maid is a prop for their scene.

Therefore, Alison's feminist practices can hardly be called a "feminist triumph" because of misogyny – it is in fact a personal triumph only for herself. In imitating the patriarchal framework, Alison elevates the status of women to the level of men, but what is the difference between "the women" in such a matriarchal order and "the men" of a patriarchal society? Therefore, what the Wife of Bath does is not to raise the status of women, but at root to turn herself into "a male" in society, behind which the prejudice towards women and the discrimination against female symbols do not change. Just as she keeps emphasizing that she is able to dominate her husband because she is clever, Alison attributes her success to the fact that she is an extraordinary woman, and therefore engages in the "othering" of most ordinary women who lack her abilities.

Not Just Marriage or Gender

In trying to speak out for women, Alison's vision is completely confined to the realm of marriage, especially to the realm of her own marriages. C. David Benson (2003, p. 135) argues that the Wife of Bath, like the Pardoner, is essentially an occupational type because "all that she ever talks about is her profession – marriage". There is no detail about her pilgrimages, gossip, or other parts of life. Everything she talks about is directly relevant to her husbands. Marriage is her battlefield to take revenge on the evil men, but at the same time, "men" and "marriage" trap her. Seeing the disadvantageous position of women in marriage, Alison fails to recognize that behind the difference in treatment between the two sexes is the misogyny brought about by class and economic disparity.

Feminism is not just about gender, but also related to the discussion of basic human rights and oppressions. Luce Irigaray believes that sexism is an unconscious form of racism (Li, 2018, p. 53). The essence of misogyny is not only the discrimination against women but rather the contempt and belittling of the disadvantaged sexual party within the historical framework of patriarchy. Then the hag's limitation is quite clear. She waives in her right and power to seek the perfect marriage, but without the right and power, only an exceptional party will acquire respect and dignity.

Therefore, Alison's practices are impossible to achieve, and she is more allegorical instead of being a believable human being. In the text, Alison's status changes immediately after the fight with Jankin. The article only has one sentence explaining the reason that "with muchel care and wo, We fille acoded, by us selven two" (Chaucer, 2006, pp. 332, 811-812). The reasons for the change, however, are vague. When a female reader reads the story of the Wife of Bath, she may initially be impressed by Alison's boldness and success, but if she ponders why Alison is successful in gaining the entire control, the story takes on a certain darker and more wistful tone.

Conclusion

Although Chaucer almost never makes a direct judgment on the status of women or expresses feminist discourse directly in *The Canterbury Tales*, we can see through the image of the Wife of Bath the author's respect and humanistic thoughts for women. The Wife of Bath is a brave rebel who fights against the patriarchal system by torturing her husbands and realizing women's dominance over men. Women's view of love is always "out of a hidden posture" in the Middle Ages, but Alison bravely speaks out her lust, her desire, and even her contempt of the existing rules (Huizinga, 2008, p. 84). On the basis of historical canons and reality, she even takes revenge by imitating the patriarchal world to establish a matriarchal system.

However, any work is bound to be influenced by the author's time and his experiences. In 14th century Europe, feudalism still had a profound impact. The complex social structure of the time inevitably had an impact on the ambivalence of Chaucer's attitude. Although being humane and compassionate toward women, Chaucer was still affected by the misogynistic context of his society. And as a member of the contemporary privileged sexual group at the medieval time, it was unlikely that he would fight for women's rights, or to condemn the ideal male images. He was able to create the victory for Alison, but his views are restricted to family ethics and, in essence, are a way of othering the heroine from the common female. It remained difficult for him to sense the discrimination towards women as a group or the fact that misogyny is the result of sexual disparities in politics, economy, and ethics rather than the cause of social disharmony. Therefore, the Prologue and Tale of the Wife of Bath was more like a male-centered fantasy

about the perfect and reciprocal marriage. Alison's triumph, through winning dominance within her marriage, does not change the misogynist context, nor the structural oppression of her society.

References

- Benson, C. D. (2003). The Canterbury tales: Personal drama or experiments in poetic variety? In *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, (pp. 127-142). (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chaucer, G. (2006). *The Canterbury tales*. United States: Bantam Dell.
- Dinshaw, C. (1990). *Chaucer's sexual poetics*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hansen, E. T. (1992). *Chaucer and the fictions of gender*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hatfield, S. B. (2000). *Gender and environment*. London: Routledge.
- He, Z. (2006). Feminist interpretation of the Wife of Bath in *The Canterbury Tales*. *Journal of Sichuan Foreign Languages University*, 03, 30-35.
- Huizinga, J. (2008). *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press (Reprinted in 2009).
- Li, Y. (2018). *Feminism*. Shanghai: Shanghai Culture Press.
- Lipton, E. (2019). Contracts, activist feminism, and the Wife of Bath's Tale. *The Chaucer Review*, 54(3), 335-351.
- Masi, M. (2005). *Chaucer and gender*. New York: P. Lang.
- Murtaugh, D. M. (1998). Women and Geoffrey Chaucer. *ELH*, 38(4), 473-492. (Dec., 1971)
- Ou, G. (2010). A brief analysis of the image of the Wife of Bath in the *Canterbury Tales*. *Journal of Suihua University*, 30(05), 98-100.
- Ueno, C. (2015). *Misogyny: Japanese female aversion*. Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore.
- Wang, H. (2018). Chaucer's ambivalent attitude towards women in *The Canterbury Tales*. Master's Thesis, Chongqing Normal University.
- Zelinka, E. (2013). Anti-antifeminism in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. *Gender Studies*, 12(1), 264-276.
- Zhang, L. (2010). Chaucer's view on women: The development of the Wife of Bath". Master's Thesis. Hunan Normal University.

A Modern Fable of Atheism: on Jacobsen's "The Plague in Bergamo"

Ai Zhong, Will Greenshields

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: emmachung@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] "The Plague in Bergamo" (1882) is Jacobsen's provocative overthrow of the Christian religion by denying religious consolation and redemption, relegating the authority of the Bible narrative and demystifying religion as the projection of human desires. We begin by considering the religious kinship and eschatological character of Jacobsen's representation of the plague; then analyze Jacobsen's narrative strategy in counteracting the authority of Scripture and his reluctance to resort to scientific and materialist narration. Finally, combining Ludwig Feuerbach's theory of the anthropological essence of Christianity, we illustrate how Jacobsen demystifies and cancels religion as a reflection of human mental psyche.

[Keywords] "The Plague in Bergamo"; Jens Peter Jacobsen; atheism; Christianity; plague

Introduction

Jens Peter Jacobsen is a Danish novelist, poet, and scientist who is renowned for his writings on the Christian religion, the rise of the Darwinian science, and the demystified human psyche. Chronically suffering from the torment of tuberculosis, much of his literature reflects upon diseases as crises, discourses of console, and the psychological reactions to the potency of death. In 1882, three years to his death, Jens Peter Jacobsen envisions a space enclosed by mortality materialized – the plague, mercilessly arbitrary and hauntingly ubiquitous. The literary device of the plague, conditioned by a rich Western classical canon, notably the epic of Homer and the tragedy of Oedipus, has established itself as the medium of discussion on divinity and humanity: does the ruthless evaporation of lives, regardless of religious piety or morality, signal the unforgiving wrath of the God and necessitate even greater devotion, reflection and contrition, or does it sear the narrative of resurrection in the state of exception it creates? As an early modern attempt to inspect the discourse on divine punishment and redemption, Jacobsen's representation of the plague foresees much modern discussion on religion, mortality and human mentality. However, contemporary scholarly attention on the story is insufficient. Apart from Morten Høi Jensen's detailed study on the life and work of Jacobsen, little has been discussed about "The Plague in Bergamo", a short story which bears great foresight and relevance to the modern problem of being after the religious disenchantment. This essay seeks to analyze the story's religious connections and eschatological elements, while addressing Jacobsen's narrative tropes to demystify religion and his consequent success in contemplating a fable of atheism.

An Unfulfilled Betrayal

Before Jacobsen wrote this short story on religious disenchantment, he had already published two renowned novels dealing with the ambivalence and disorientation of both religion and atheism: *Marie Grubbe* (1876), charting the downfall of a 17th-century noblewoman, and *Niels Lyhne* (1880), depicting the miserable life of a dedicated atheist. The vehement impiety of the plague-stricken Bergamo that opens the story is, in fact, a dramatized reproduction of the teenage abandonment of faith in *Niels Lyhne*, where the eponymous protagonist cursed God for his indifference and refusal to resurrect the sickened Aunt Edele upon her deathbed. Having prayed fervently with "faith in the omnipotence of prayer, with courage to plead until he should be heard", yet watching "death [march] straight on and [seize] its prey, as if no sheltering wall of

prayers had been lifted toward the sky”, the young Niels Lyhne swings to despondency and disillusionment, “refused to do God homage”, and “defied and cast God out of his heart” (Jacobsen, 2017). At Aunt Edele’s funeral, Niels “spurned the earth of the grave with his foot, whenever the pastor spoke the name of the Lord”, taking pride and consolation in “a sense of forsaken greatness” of his retaliation against God (ibid.). This blasphemy, however, would be easily rebuked for it inherently presupposes “the crude, implicit fairy-tale faith” where God “always answers with a miracle” (Jacobsen, 2017). It is weak because it is yet to extricate itself from the paradox of rebellion and disengage from the religious expression of Christianity, the language of God, as Jacobsen remarks: “He took sides, as completely as he could, against God, but like a vassal who takes up arms against his rightful master because he still believed he could not banish his faith” (ibid.).

In a strikingly similar manner, the people in Bergamo first “sought the churches early and late, alone and in processions”, swelling the city with prayers and wailing church bells that call towards heaven, yet soon in the futility of invocation and piety, they “not only let their hands lie idly in the lap, saying, ‘Let there come what may’”, but also degenerated into “blasphemy and impiety”, “the most unnatural vices” and “even such rare *sins* as necromancy, magic, and exorcism” (Jacobsen, 2004). Though their blatant misdeeds seem sacrilegious and defiant, so far Bergamo’s deviation remains religious, and in this sense, pre-modern. The attribution of the plague to divine punishment, the pious plea for mercy and salvation, as well as divine absence or abandonment and the consequent defection from faith, are all common themes within the Christian narrative. Bergamo inherits the Christian tradition of understanding the plague as the divine intervention in moral culpability – the ten plagues inflicted upon the pagan Egypt and the prophesied pestilences that will bring fatality and the Last Judgement to men display and assure the Lord’s wrath, might, and most importantly, produces the possibility and urgency for redemption. Furthermore, Bergamo’s reaction to the plague is also religious in its essence, whether in their initial extreme piety, or in their latter fanatical blasphemy, provoked by the dismay at divine abandonment, which is itself a recurrent and crucial subject of the Bible. The Bible gives many examples of questioning God’s dereliction, from the widowed Ruth who cries “the Lord’s hand has turned against me” (Ruth 1:13, New International Version), to the “blameless and upright” Job who loses everything and feels that “[t]he arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God’s terrors are marshaled against me” (Job 1:1, 6:4), and even Jesus himself when he was dying from his crucifixion: “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (Mark 15:34). The vicious Bergamo evokes the sinful biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, haughty and abominable, resigning love and reciprocity, and the discourse with which the vices are described is eschatological and apocalyptic, with Jacobsen repeatedly using, for instance, *sin* instead of *crime* to refer to Bergamo’s transgression:

“‘To-day we shall eat, for to-morrow we die!’—It was as if they had set these words to music, and played on manifold instruments a *never-ending hellish concert*. Yea, if all *sins* had not already been invented, they would have been invented here, for there was no road they would not have followed in their wickedness” (Jacobsen, 2004, Italics added).

At this point, the eschatological atmosphere created by a style of religious fable and biblical allusions seems to anticipate what Christianity would assign as finality – redemption, just as God replenishes Job, or tears the veil of His Holy of Holies in half and raises the dead. However, what Jacobsen will send is not angelic envoys delivering messages of exhortation and admonition but a procession that will accomplish an overturning of the Christian religion.

The Poetics of Falsification

At the eleventh week of the plague, a procession of flagellants enters the city, and is greeted by the people of Bergamo with malignity, mockery, and frivolity. However, the cruel gospel their monk preaches, contrary to Bergamo's expectation, is not devoted to conversion and redemption, but would render a ruthless betrayal of the Christian doctrine. The monk reprimands the illusion to escape the eternal punishment of hell because "Christ died for our sins ... and we are no longer subject to the law" (Jacobsen, 2004). He narrates a deceptively vivid story of crucifixion with bountiful details that are faithful to the Bible – the condemnatory tablet stating His crime of professing to be 'King of the Jews', the soldiers casting lots for His garment, and the onlookers' taunts at His inability to save himself. However, the narration is antithetical to the holy text in the most decisive moment – this Jesus does not lament and die for the sin of mankind, instead, "He, the only begotten Son of God was taken with anger, and saw that they were not worthy of salvation, these mobs that fill the earth" (Jacobsen, 2004)). The monk's Jesus leaps down from the cross and ascends straight into heaven like a king.

The foundation of the hermeneutics of the Bible is the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16), and the Book of Revelation warns against any alteration of the holy scroll – "God will add to that person *the plagues* described in this scroll" (Revelation 22:18-19, italics added). The monk and his creed, in this sense, are performing the highest profanity. Here, the power vacuum of faith generated by the plague is seized by the heretical preaching of the monk, while the orthodox Christianity retreats both in form (the cessation of ceremonies and services) and content (the falsifiability of the Bible narrative).

The plague, in literary history, has long been a device for the discussion of religion and the relationship between man and God. The nature of the disease renders it the perfect instrument for challenging, if not undermining, the reign of religion. It provides an "ambivalent modality of corporeal apocalypse", because it has a heinous potential for separating the condemned from the saved in the typical apocalyptic purification narrative (and thus a metaphor for genocide in Camus's *The Plague*), but the universality of infection and mortality discredits the doctrine of grace and retribution as well as Endism's euphoric optimism, and the insufferableness of the devastation and infliction destructs the religious mind (Gomel, 2000, p. 406). In response to such an indiscriminate and ruthless characteristic of the disease, there are several literary mechanisms. Firstly, a presence, or appearance of divinity through its earthly medium of prophets, priests and oracles, could provide certainty and resolution for the fatal misery, as in Homer's *Iliad* or in Sophocles' *Oedipus*. Or, by contrast, God (or gods) could remain absent throughout the narrative, and the religious faith is thus subject to interrogation. The plague could be understood entirely in material causes, as in Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, and represented in the materialist, historical and scientific account, as in Thucydides' retrospective record of the Athenian plague and Defoe's pseudo-historical novel *Journal of the Plague Year*. Science, the philosophy of believing in what is visible and verifiable, in such narratives where the material supplants the metaphysical, is the opposing counterpart of religion, the philosophy of believing in what the eyes cannot see. Another way of casting doubts upon the religion is to challenge the religious ethics that assigns a meaning to suffering. The child's innocence, for instance, nullifies Father Paneloux's theory of the divine scourge and a salutary lesson. If "the plague is the flail of God and the world His threshing-floor, and implacably He will thresh out His harvest until the wheat is separated from the chaff", what is to be learned and repented from in a child's death? (Camus, 1948, p. 72).

It is curious that Jacobsen chooses neither of these mechanisms, especially the second one, given his intensive interest in modern science as the first Danish translator of Charles Darwin and his ambivalent

attribution of the plague to “the physical contagion” – “it seemed, as if sin had grown from a secret, stealthy disease into a wicked, open, raging plague, which *hand in hand with the physical contagion* sought to slay the soul as *the other strove to destroy the body...*” (Jacobsen, 2004, italics added). Jacobsen shares Defoe’s implication of a medical and material cause of the plague, but unlike Defoe, narrates the pestilence in an allegorical and poetical style. He constructs the horror of the plague not by a naturalist display of the visual and sensational evidence of suffering, but by a poetic (and eschatological) representation of the spiritual desperation and desolation:

“And day by day the plague increased ... corpses that lay rotting in the houses and from corpses that were only half-buried in the earth ... attracted swarms and clouds of ravens and crows until the walls and roofs were black with them. And ... strange, large, outlandish birds ... with beaks eager for spoil and expectantly crooked claws; and they sat there and looked down with their tranquil greedy eyes as if only waiting for the unfortunate town to turn into one huge carrion-pit” (Jacobsen, 2004).

The corporeal presentation of agony, a key focus in Lucretius’s materialist account of the disease and the depletion of the body, from the contracted finger sinews, the sunken eye and the hollow temples to fever, hemorrhage, and spasm, is barely even depicted by Jacobsen. Nor does he adopt Defoe’s journalistic, detached and scientific language cultivated by an accumulation of death tolls, statutes, announcements and a faithful depiction of physical symptoms.

This seems incongruous with his educational and professional background, as Jacobsen established himself as a leading supporter of Darwin in Denmark in his earliest contact with the radical literary circles of Georg Brandes and Edvard Brandes, for whom the theory of evolution was a weapon in their literary and political assault on Danish society (Jensen, 2017). However, for Jacobsen, the scientific language is insufficient to “transfer Nature’s eternal laws, its delights, mysteries, and miracles into the world of poetry”, and science is incompatible with literature – “There are moments in my life when I think that the study of Nature is my life’s calling; but at other times it seems as if poetry should be my vocation” (Knudsen, 1893, p. 9, cited Jensen, 2017, p. 64). Moreover, science and its materialist epistemology are inadequate to answer the existential question that concerns the imminence of a sure mortality caused by a deadly disease. Jacobsen was diagnosed with tuberculosis at the age of 26, a disease that was considered a death sentence; a steady consumption of life, as scientists were late to even identify the tubercle bacillus in 1882. Tuberculosis, much like the plague that besieges Old Bergamo, isolates the patient from the vitality of the metropolitan Copenhagen into the bleak loneliness of a countryside sanatorium, where death awaits like the Bergamo birds’ “tranquil greedy eyes” (Jacobsen, 2004). In the face of an assured finality, religion proclaims to offer what is lacking in the diagnoses and prescriptions of modern medicine and science – the consolation of redemption. For an atheist whose atheism was not a simply a radical posture of defiance against the political oppression of institutionalized churches but a “difficult moral commitment” to the banality of a life of existential injustice (Jensen, 2017, p. 141), the scientific refutation of religion is unsatisfactory, and the prosaic language of science is meager in comparison with the poetics of storytelling. That the Bible is a form of storytelling and that a heretic orator can beguile his audience with a more compelling story, is Jacobsen’s atheist thrust at the Christian religion. The Bible’s power comes not from the truth of its message (an imposture has the same persuasive influence), but from the discursive power of a narration that is “a mythology no different from the Greek and the Norse”, in Jacobsen’s words (Jacobsen, 1993, pp. 9-10, cited Jensen, 2017, p. 31). The poetics of falsification takes over the philosophy of

authenticity when the Bergamo people, confusing reality with fiction, beseech the monk to “crucify Him” (Jacobsen, 2004). Their clamour is not just “a darkly parable of human nature” as Morgen Høi Jensen observes (2017, p. 161); it is a Nietzschean affirmation of the poet’s power to tell lies.

Christianity as the Projection of Human Desires

Ludwig Feuerbach, one of Jacobsen’s favorite philosophers, reveals in his critique of religion *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) what he refers to as the “true or anthropological substance of religion”, presenting God in his numerous guises, as, among others, “a moral being or law” (Feuerbach, 1972, p. 44). Feuerbach points out that since man has given God the capacity for knowledge, he is a more conscious being than God, and that every characteristic or requirement of human nature can be found in facets of God, and thus God is the outward projection of the inner human psyche. Feuerbach refers to this projection as a “chimera” since man is capable of comprehending and applying the meanings of divinity to religion rather than being automatically granted divinity by religion and religious comportment. Through the creation of God, man projects his part unto the divinely image of a conceptual higher being that repulses himself, because theology demands that “God alone is the being who acts of himself, – this is the force of repulsion in religion” (Feuerbach, 1972, p. 31).

The flagellants’ maddening penance of self-mutilation in their frenzy worship of God and how their madness captures the contemptuously impious people of Bergamo is Jacobsen’s literary realization of the philosophical demystification of the Christian religion. When the flagellants madly flog themselves, the people of Bergamo feel seized by their madness: “It seemed as if something cold was growing out beneath their scalps, and their knees grew weak. It seized hold of them; in their brains was a little spot of madness which understood this frenzy” (Jacobsen, 2004). The madness of the flagellants is a powerful desire for enslavement, captivity and self-sabotage, a desire beyond the seek for pleasure, security and tranquility, which psychoanalysis would latter term as “death drive”. Their frenzied desire to belittle their being before the eternal existence of the harsh and powerful Deity is the human psyche’s propensity to invent a transcendent being that is not subject to the laws of consumption and finality, that survives the destruction of the physical tangibility, and that debilitates the presence of anguish with a promise for its temporality. The blood, the wailing, and the “wet gleaming scourges” are material substitutes for the mental madness generated by the unbearable arbitrariness and fatality of the disease (Jacobsen, 2004). Every blow of theirs is a sacrifice to the God who is a projection of their humanly desire to make meaning out of inanity. This, Jacobsen writes, “they (the people of Bergamo) were capable of understanding”. It is the fanatic desires and the lunatic expressions of such desires that the people of Bergamo resonate with, and in this space where religion is heightened and suspended, the human mentality of madness takes the place of God.

The banners held by the flagellants are a crucial footnote to Jacobsen’s denial of and disenchantment with Christianity. When plagues strike Christian cities, plague banners, or gonfaloni, are the typical form of popular art “raised between heaven and earth, as though to convey to God a splendid manifestation of popular repentance” (Crawford, 1914, p. 136). Priesthood march before the expiatory banners, followed by a penitent people wailing aloud “Misericordia”, the Latin word for *mercy*. The banners display “the figure of the Redeemer, or the Madonna, or some other plague saint”, in an attempt to produce a degree of spiritual exaltation in the minds of the procession and the gazing audience (Crawford, 1914, p. 137). In some cases, the banners depict a sad and regretful Christ, in His cruciferous nimbus, diligently obeying the will of His Father and holding the arrows of pestilence ready to be shot at people. Nevertheless, it is also common that the Saint on the banners exhibits a protecting position, spreading their robe to shed the confraternities. This

is in accordance with the language of the Psalm, which highlights God's benevolence: "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and *from the deadly pestilence*" (Psalm 91: 2-3, italics added). In either case, on nearly all these banners, as in other archaic works of Christianity, the Madonna, or another saint figure, occupies most of the surface, indicating their superiority compared to other individuals. The art of these gonfaloni always advocates God's presence and His omnipotence to ordain individual destinies and redeem the sinners.

As Louise Marshall observes, the banners also allow worshipers to approach Christ himself as their mediator and advocate, especially when concentration is drawn upon the divine justice or wrath of God the Father. In a processional banner from Fabriano, Christ is depicted as a child holding a model of the city. Fully God and fully human, He offers himself as intercessor between the sinful humanity and the offended divinity. His transparent garment reveals his nudity as the visible proof of his "humanation", his place below the stern Father who is poised to drop punitive arrows indicates His voluntary descent into human frailty, and the loving glance He exchanges with his mother the Virgin conveys His responsiveness to human prayers and repentance (Marshall, 1994, p. 525). On the plague banners, the uncompromising arrows remind the beholders of the permanent threat of divine justice, while the protecting Madonna, the praying clergy and laity, or the humanized Christ proffers the solution to tragedy as the devotion to Christianity. When the artists of Renaissance believe that Christ's redemptive death renders Him a shield and a promise of deliverance, the plague banners they produce demonstrate a striking confidence to avert the plague with supernatural aid and celestial relief. This tendency to resort to external forces is observed by Feuerbach as the illusory essence of religion: "It fancies its object, its ideas, to be superhuman" (Feuerbach, 1972, p. 14). Contrary to his preceding artists, Jacobsen offers a different picture. The flagellants marching towards Bergamo hold "red banners" on which only "a rain of fire is pictured", and "the black crosses sway[ing] from one side to the other in the crowd" are empty without Christ on them (Jacobsen, 2004). When the sight of God and his envoy is missing from the physical medium of art, the people of Bergamo are forced to return to their minds and sensations, where they discover their resonance with the fervid human mentality. As Feuerbach points out: "Out of the need for salvation is postulated something transcending human nature, a being different from man. But no sooner is this being postulated than there arises the yearning of man after himself, after his own nature, and man is immediately re-established" (Feuerbach, 1972, p. 45).

The monk's refusal to crucify Jesus again is Jacobsen's satire of modernity's inability to resurrect the God that is dead. Just as Feuerbach elucidates that a God who is not benevolent is no God because His blissfulness is merely a projection of man's hope for goodness, a religion that is deprived of the promise for consolation and unveiled to be the essential attribute of man is no religion. What is left for the atheist modern society is the plague of existential angst, a "smoke blackened void", continuing after the departure of the procession of decides.

Conclusion

Drawing from biblical references, Jacobsen's account of the plague portrays a shift from devoutness to blasphemy and moral decay, echoing biblical themes of abandonment and questioning divine presence. Bergamo's descent into sin parallels biblical cities like Sodom and Gomorrah, hinting at an apocalyptic atmosphere and yet incorporating a possible departure from traditional Christian redemptive narratives. The arrival of flagellants marks a turning point as the monk's manipulative preaching distorts the Bible, creating a textual betrayal of the crucifixion narrative and thus challenging the sanctity and authority of the Scripture. In his challenge of the Christian religion, however, Jacobsen adopts a poetical and allegorical style to

represent the plague, rather than resorting to the discourse of science, which was gaining popularity at his time. His departure from a scientific portrayal seems incongruent with his support for Darwinism, yet it reflects his belief in the limitations of science to encapsulate existential questions about mortality and redemption. He challenges the authenticity of religious texts, likening them to mythology. Ultimately, Jacobsen's tale illuminates the unsettling potency of storytelling, exhibiting how the poetics of falsification can shape collective belief. Furthermore, the portrayal of flagellants in Bergamo, engaging in frenzied acts of self-mortification as a display of worship, mirrors the human psyche's desperate desire to project transcendence beyond mortal limitations. In this sense, Jacobsen's narrative aligns with Feuerbach's idea that the longing for salvation leads to the projection of qualities transcending human nature onto a divine being. The flagellants' fervent behavior represents a quest for a higher existence that defies human frailty and mortality, a longing encapsulated by the idea of a transcendent being surviving physical destruction and soothing existential anguish. What's more, the banners carried by the flagellants contrast sharply with traditional plague banners seen in Christian cities. While conventional banners depict Christ or saints as saviors and shields against divine wrath, Jacobsen's narrative presents empty black crosses and images of a rain of fire. This absence of traditional religious imagery forces the people of Bergamo to confront their mortality, signaling a departure from externalized religious reliance towards a more introspective understanding of human mentality. Ultimately, religion is stripped of its consoling promises, leaving behind a void of existential angst in a society without the facade of divine intervention.

References

- Camus, A. (1948). *The plague*. Stuart Gilbert, (Trans.) New York: Penguin Random House.
- Crawford, R. (1914). *Plague and pestilence in literature and art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feuerbach, L. (1972). *The essence of Christianity*. George Eliot, (Trans.). New York: Prometheus Books.
- Gomel, E. (2000). The plague of Utopias: Pestilence and the apocalyptic body. *Twentieth Century Literature*, 46(04), 405-433.
- Jacobsen, J. P. (2017). *Niels Lyhne*. Hanna Astrup Larsen, (Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Electronic version by Project Gutenberg.
- Jacobsen, J. P. (2004). *Mogens and other stories*. Anna Grabow, (Trans.). Electronic version by Project Gutenberg.
- Jensen, M. H. (2017). *A difficult death: The life and work of Jens Peter Jacobsen*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Marshall, L. (1994). Manipulating the sacred: Image and plague in Renaissance Italy. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47(03), 485-532.
- The Holy Bible. (2011). *New international version*. Biblica. Available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com>.

An Actor-Network Approach to English Translation of Su Wei's *Invisible Valley*

Xinyi Luo, Qiaodan Lu*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: tinaluo76@163.com

[Abstract] Actor-Network Theory (ANT) encourages researchers to delve into the synergy of various actors in the translation process, shedding new light on translation studies. The English version of *Invisible Valley* by Su Wei sparked positive reactions in the American publishing market; however, there have been some twists and turns in its translation and publication. Drawing on ANT, this paper divides the translation network of *Invisible Valley* into two sub-networks, namely, the production network and the dissemination network, presents the inner working patterns of each sub-network with the four moments of translation^{ANT}, which include problematization, intersement, enrolment, and mobilization, and traces and restores how various actors interacted with each other in the dynamic network of *Invisible Valley*, hoping to provide inspiration for future translation of Chinese works.

[Keywords] *Invisible Valley*; actor-network theory; translation^{ANT}; translation process

Introduction

As more agencies and agents became involved in translation procedures in the 1990s, the social practices between these participants greatly influenced the translation process, and a so-called “sociological turn” emerged in translation studies, which boosted new approaches to translation studies (Wolf, 2011). The actor-network theory (hereinafter referred to as ANT) is one of the most notable frameworks in the sociology of translation studies. Rather than viewing translation as a process of purely transferring messages from one language to another, ANT regards translation as a complex social practice that relates to a variety of participants in its production and dissemination.

Written from 1993 to 1998 by Su Wei, a Chinese-American author known for his highly imaginative novels, *Invisible Valley* has received recognition in the Chinese literary community since its publication in 2004. Previous research papers mainly studied *Invisible Valley* and its English translation from the perspective of regional culture, and compositional translatology, lacking the macro-level investigation of the production and dissemination process. Given the comprehensive perspective offered by ANT, which acknowledges the influence of both human and non-human actors within a network, this paper aims to fill this research gap by conducting an empirical study utilizing the ANT framework. To achieve this objective, this paper gathers relevant information concerning *Invisible Valley* at home and abroad, identifies all the human and non-human elements involved in the translation process, and reconstructs the production network and dissemination network.

Theoretical Framework

Rooted in science and technology studies, ANT was put forward by scholars Bruno Latour, Michael Callon, and John Law in the 1980s and 90s. According to the theory, all elements, including people, technology, and other non-human objects, exist inside a network of interactive relationships. For further analysis of the

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: luqdan@163.com

application of the ANT framework in translation studies, several key concepts will be explained in the following part.

A network in the ANT framework refers to a heterogeneous network where different actors, including human actors and non-human actors, mobilize, juxtapose, and lock the compositions resulting, with the goal to produce an organizational effect. In other words, network is a term used to measure the amount of energy, movement, and detail that research reports can trace, which helps researchers present flows of translations (Latour, 2005, p. 132). As one of the main concepts in ANT, actor in ANT is defined as any entity that is part of a network (Michael, 2017, p. 153), including both human and non-human entities.

The concept of translation^{ANT} is of paramount importance in the ANT framework, as it presents different interpretations of each actor's interests, identifies their shared position, piques general interest in the outcome of driving forces' claims, and eventually consolidates the connection and association between them. Callon (1986) puts forward that translation^{ANT} contains four moments: problematization, intersement, enrolment, and mobilization.

Problematization is a phase where a set of actors are determined as a system of alliances, their identities are established, and what they "want" is revealed (Callon, 1986). In addition, the Obligatory Point of Passage (OPP), which refers to the passageway that all entities agree to pass, is also determined throughout the phase of problematization.

Intersement is defined as a set of behaviors used by an entity to impose and stabilize the identities of the other actors it has defined through problematization. The essence of intersement is to attract actors and cut off the possibility for them to accept other definitions.

Enrolment is a stage in which a collection of interconnected roles is established and assigned to actors who accept them; it can only be reached when intersement has been successfully completed. In the phase of enrolment, the group of multilateral negotiations, strength tests, and strategies that support the intersement take place (Callon, 1986).

Mobilization is the last stage of translation^{ANT}, which answers the crucial questions of "who speaks in the name of whom" (Callon, 1986, p. 214). After the above three steps, a lot of actors get involved and may have the possibility of leaving. Therefore, it is important to select spokesmen who effectively represent diverse groups while safeguarding against betrayal.

An Actor-Network Approach to the English Translation of *Invisible Valley*

On the basis of the information collected, the paper divides the translation process of *Invisible Valley* into two networks, namely the production network and the dissemination network, and applies the four moments of translation^{ANT} to analyze each network.

Production Network of Invisible Valley

Problematization: *Invisible Valley* as the source text. In the problematization stage of the production network, the actors involved are Su Wei, the author of *Invisible Valley*, the reputation of Su Wei in the literature circle, and the Chinese version of *Invisible Valley*. As a pioneer of the literature of "Chinese students studying abroad" after the adoption of the policy of reform and opening to the outside world, Su Wei has long been involved in teaching Chinese at Yale University and has a strong commitment to promoting Chinese culture (Han, 2020). It was also Su Wei's wish to let English readers have a taste of life on the Chinese tropical island through the translation of his work.

Invisible Valley was selected as the source text as it shared characteristics with popular translated literature available on the English book market and was thought to have the potential to draw English readers. As shown in *Ten of the Best Chinese Books in Translation* listed by Nicky Harman (2018), all of these translated works are deeply rooted in China's modern history, with four of them incorporating fantastical elements. This suggests that English readers have a tendency to value translated literary works that possess an exotic flavor and incorporate fantastical elements, which resonate with the distinctive qualities found in *Invisible Valley*. In addition to its Cultural Revolution backdrop, *Invisible Valley* is richly infused with fantasy and surrealism, blending many fantastic elements such as the Snakeweird, ghosts, and spirits, thereby holding the potential to attract English readers.

Additionally, it is of importance to investigate the literary fame of Su Wei, as Rachel Bitoun, writer for *The Artifice* holds that publishing houses tend to publish "translated literature produced by established authors" (Fitzpatrick, 2016). In Chinese literature circles, Su Wei is regarded as a pioneer of literature of "students studying abroad" after the reform and opening up and is famous for his highly imaginative novels. As one of Su Wei's representative works, *Invisible Valley* has drawn praise in Chinese literary circles. For example, Hu (2020) considered *Invisible Valley* a gem of modern Chinese literature as Su Wei skillfully merged Chinese myth, history, and reality in this book. With the aforementioned three factors, it is therefore clear that the interests of all actors lie in accomplishing an English translation of *Invisible Valley*.

Interessement and enrolment: Austin Woerner as the translator. Interessement refers to the process of locking the actors into their respective roles, and enrolment is a stage where negotiations are carried out. In the phases of interessement and enrolment, Austin Woerner, a student of Su Wei, was attracted by *Invisible Valley* and was then locked as the only translator after his translation competence revealed in the trial translation was confirmed by Su Wei and his Sinologist friends.

While studying at Yale University, Woerner became deeply immersed in studying Chinese, because Su Wei, his teacher, enjoyed telling them interesting tales about Chinese idioms, as well as stories of his experiences as a sent-down youth on Hainan Island. Woerner thought this was all dramatic and interesting, so he frequently visited Su Wei during his office hours. Such a close teacher-student relationship between Woerner and Su Wei gave Woerner an advantage over other translators: the opportunity to interact closely with the author and deepen his understanding of the context in which *Invisible Valley* was written. Moreover, Woerner tried to translate *Invisible Valley* at Su Wei's suggestion (Lin, & Chen, 2018).

Austin Woerner's excellent command of Chinese and English also played a vital role in absorbing Woerner as the focal actor in the production network. Before asking Austin Woerner to translate *Invisible Valley*, Su Wei had examined two trial translations by the students at Middlebury and Princeton and found them disappointing. However, the trial translation of Austin Woerner, which was passed on by teacher Su Wei to several of his famous Sinologist friends for review, was highly praised (Han, 2020). Austin Woerner's excellent command of both Chinese and English is fully embodied in the translation of *Invisible Valley*, and it proves that his translation strategies are what ultimately give the target text its high quality. The translator manages to maintain the exoticism of *Invisible Valley* while making it understandable to English readers by striking a balance between domestication and foreignization. For instance, the paper finds that the translator applies domestication strategy in the translation of certain culture-loaded words, as demonstrated in examples 1 to 3.

ST1: 你们这山碗背面, 算儋州的地界; 白沙怕儋州独吃了巴灶山里的树材, 准我们进山伐树倒木, 开板成材以后送出山外收购。(苏炜, 2006, p. 55)

TT1: *This bluff here is the border between Tam-chow and Whitesands. Whitesands is afraid you down in Tam-chow are about to burn the mountain clean of wood, so they let us up*

here to log and ship timber down to sell (Woerner, 2018, p. 69).

In Chinese, “独吃” does not simply mean eating alone, but rather has a negative connotation that refers to someone who is selfish and always hoards things to themselves without being willing to share with others. In the first example, “独吃” suggests that Tam-chow may monopolize the wood resources in Mudkettle Mountain without considering the needs of Whitesands. Austin Woerner translated this phrase to “burn the mountain clean of wood”, which captures the same connotation as the original Chinese phrase and is appropriate for the target cultural context.

ST2: 牛像雷一样地滚过山坳。路北平告诉阿苍，他觉得自己像完成了一次“薛仁贵东征”。(苏炜, 2006, p. 60)

TT2: The cattle rumbled through the gap. (I felt like I'd just come back from a harrowing military campaign, Lu Beiping joked to Tsung.) (Woerner, 2018, p. 77).

“Xue Rengui’s Campaign to the East” is a word-for-word translation of “薛仁贵东征”, which refers to a military campaign led by Xue Rengui, a general in the Tang Dynasty, and is used to describe how hard and tired Lu Beiping is at this moment. Given that lots of English readers do not have the background information on “Xue Rengui’s Campaign to the East”, the translator used “a harrowing military campaign” to make the phrase easily understandable for English readers while maintaining the exaggerated tone of Lu in the source text.

ST3: 他不是已经告发过一回了么？路北平仍旧不屑，八哥还听他炒这种冷饭。(苏炜, 2006, p. 229)

TT3: —Didn’t he already tell Kingfisher? Lu Beiping said, still disdainful. I thought this would be old news by now (Woerner, 2018, p. 284).

In Example 3, the Chinese phrase “炒冷饭” literally means to fry leftover rice, and it often indicates saying or doing the same old thing. Aware that the author employs the figurative sense of this phrase, Austin Woerner chooses to directly explain its hidden meaning, which avoids potential misunderstanding if translated word for word.

Moreover, the most obvious manifestation of the strategy of foreignization lies in the translation of characters’ names and nicknames, which combines the methods of transliteration and literal translation, as shown in Table 1. The paper finds that about 36.8% of the characters’ names are transliterated into *Hainanese*. Considering that the novel is set in Hainan, the translator creatively uses local pronunciations to translate names without specific meanings, such as Wing (阿荣) and Choi (阿彩). Besides, about 57.9% of the names and nicknames are translated literally, with most of them having clear imagery, such as Autumn (阿秋) and Jade (阿佩), reflecting the meaning of their original names.

Table 1. *Selected Character Names and Nicknames*

Chinese Names	English Names
球婶	Mrs. Kau
阿荣	Wing
阿娴	Han
阿苍	Tsung
阿彩	Choi
阿芳	Fong
阿佩	Jade
阿木	Stump
阿秋	Autumn
四眼	Four Eyes
金骨头	Kambugger
老金头	Gaffer Kam
头哥	Horn

Mobilization: Support received during Woerner’s translation. As the final stage of translation in ANT, mobilization concerns the question of “who speaks in the name of whom” (Callon, 1986a, p. 214), and actors come into play in this phase. The translator became the representative of the source text of *Invisible Valley* in mobilization and spoke for the text depending on his understanding of the novel. In this process, Austin Woerner was supported by the author Su Wei, his friend Tony Fok, and a professor from UC Riverside.

As for the author’s support, Woerner traveled from New York to New Haven, where Su Wei was living, every month or two during his translation process to go over chapters, discuss questions, and immerse himself deeply into the world depicted in *Invisible Valley*. Later, with Tony Fok’s help, Woerner had the opportunity to travel to Hainan, to “physically enter the world” in *Invisible Valley* (Woerner, 2018). The financial support provided by UC Riverside is also worth mentioning. After identifying the excellent translation competence of Austin Woerner, Perry Link, a professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at UC Riverside, invited him to give a translation lecture at UC Riverside and initiated a visiting scholarship for Woerner in autumn 2010, which enabled him to finish the first draft of the translation.

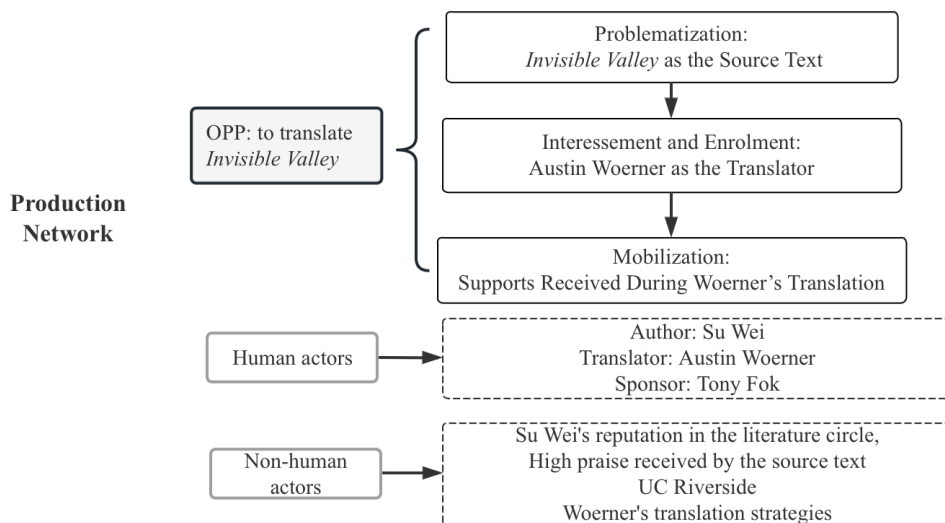


Figure 1. Production Network of *Invisible Valley*

Dissemination Network of *Invisible Valley*

Problematization: Publishing and promoting. Actors entailed in the dissemination network include human actors: Austin Woerner, the literary agent, John Crowley, an American author of fantasy, editors from big publishing houses, scholars who reviewed the English version of *Invisible Valley*, and non-human actors: the English translation of *Invisible Valley*, big commercial publishing houses and the Small Beer Press. Naturally, after finishing the complete translation of *Invisible Valley*, Austin Woerner needed to seek a publishing house that was willing to publish the book, further cooperate with the publishing house, and rely on its economic strength and connections to promote the book to American readers. It is therefore clear that the publishing house is defined as a focal actor in the dissemination network.

Interessement and Enrolment: Finding Small Beer Press. With an aim to publish and promote the English translation of *Invisible Valley*, it was of importance to arouse the interest of a publishing house in the English translation of *Invisible Valley* and lock it as the focal actor during the interessement and enrolment phases. In the United States, the literary agent acts as a middleman between the author and the publishing house in the publishing process, and it is necessary to find one before connecting with publishing houses (Chen, 2019). It is a literary agents' job to assess the books they get, choose the best ones, get in touch with a number of publishers, and find the one that is willing to publish the book, so they have abundant human resources in the publishing market, which can make the publishing process relatively easy. Following this market principle, Austin Woerner found a senior literary agent in the publishing process. The English translation of *Invisible Valley* was highly appreciated by this literary agent and was sent to several big commercial publishing houses with his help. However, the manuscript of *Invisible Valley* was circulated among these major commercial publishing houses for a long time and eventually came to nothing

(Su, 2018). In some cases, the editors gave the English translation of *Invisible Valley* high praise, but when it came time for the book to be published, they declined because they believed the commercial value of this book was low, and the book coincided with the already-published novels of “re-educated youth” on the American book market. In other circumstances, editors thought the book “was too strange for our readers” and advised Woerner to “domesticate the book” (Woerner, 2018).

Meanwhile, John Crowley, the author of *Little, Big*, praised *Invisible Valley* as a remarkable book upon seeing the manuscript of Woerner’s translation, and it was he who first brought the Small Beer Press to Austin Woerner’s sight. Founded by famous American short story writer Kelly Link and her husband Gavin Grant in 2000, the Small Beer Press was famous for its unique categories of published works, namely novels that crossed among fantasy, science fiction, and realism, and were hard to fit into one literary genre (Su, 2018). As a combination of surreal, fantastical, and historical elements, *Invisible Valley* was in line with the publishing style of Small Beer Press. In addition, Austin Woerner was a regular reader of the mystery novels published by the Small Beer Press and had heard of the press from his friends in the publishing industry. As a result, the manuscript was sent to the Small Beer Press, and its publishing turned out successfully (Han, 2020).

Mobilization: Promoting *Invisible Valley*. Focusing on the core issue of the mobilization stage: “who speaks and acts on behalf of whom”, the mobilization phase aims to make book reviews, and reports, the author, and the translator speak on behalf of *Invisible Valley*, so as to shape a good public perception of the book and let more American readers become interested in it. After the English version of *Invisible Valley* came out, more than ten book reviews were written by Ha Jin, John Crowley, Perry Link, and other famous writers, and several authoritative media including Publishers Weekly, Kirkus Reviews, World Literature Today and Library Journal published reviews on *Invisible Valley*. What’s more, *Invisible Valley* was selected as one of the “75 Notable Translations of 2018” by World Literature Today.

Additionally, the author and the translator of *Invisible Valley* gave lectures on *Invisible Valley* as well as its translation process and communicated with their readers face to face. For example, in July 2018, they held a lecture titled “Chinese Speculative Fiction” at the Asian American Writers’ Workshop, which was moderated by Jeremy Tiang, a writer and literary translator (Su, Woerner and Tiang, 2018). Through their efforts, *Invisible Valley* received good repercussions in the United States, and it scored 4.14 out of 5 on Goodreads, with 78% of readers giving it four-star or higher rating praises, and many reviews regarded Austin Woerner’s translation as a triumph. For example, Ha Jin (2018), winner of the National Book Award, lauds *Invisible Valley* as an “extraordinary novel” that opens a world of rubber groves and mystery and regards the translation of the novel as absolutely stunning.

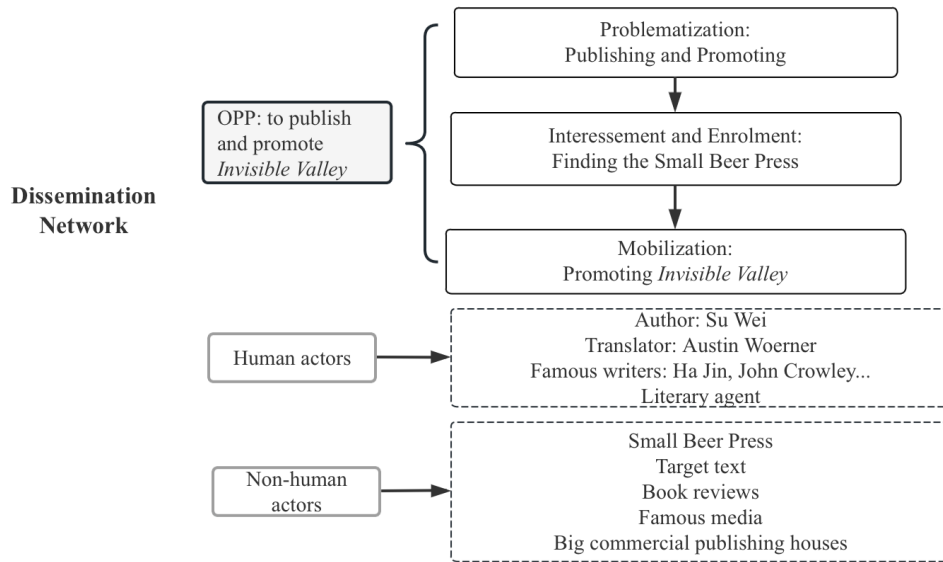


Figure 2. Dissemination Network of *Invisible Valley*

Conclusion

Guided by ANT, the paper analyzes the production and dissemination network of the English translation of *Invisible Valley*. Viewing human and non-human actors as equally important, this paper identifies all human and non-human actors involved in each network, and seeks out two Obligatory Passage Points within these networks: to translate *Invisible Valley* and to publish and promote *Invisible Valley*. Moreover, this paper explores how the translator interacts with the author and the sponsor to consolidate the existing network, and how they absorb new actors like the literary agent and the Small Beer Press into the dissemination network to raise the effectiveness of the publication and promotion of *Invisible Valley*.

In addition, drawing on the ANT framework, this research provides valuable insights into the promotion of Chinese literary works in the future and encourages future translators to study translation in the social environment and recognize the larger translation networks including publishers, writers, critics, and readers. Besides, this paper emphasizes the role played by non-human actors, such as the social environment, the author’s reputation in the literature circle, and book reviews from famous writers and authoritative media, in the translation process based on the ANT framework, which may enlighten translators and relevant actors to improve their translation and dissemination strategies in the future.

References

Callon, M. (1986). Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay. In J. Law, (Ed.), *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, (pp. 196-224). London: Routledge.

Chen, Y. (2019). 20 years in Yale: I teach students, students teach me. Retrieved from https://www.sohu.com/a/339360883_639570.

Fitzpatrick, M. (2016). Translation in the English-speaking world. Retrieved from <http://publishingtrendsetter.com/industryinsight/translation-englishspeaking-world/>.

- Han, B. W. (2020). The biggest bottleneck for Chinese contemporary literature going global lies in translation: An interview with North American “new immigrant” Writer Su Wei. Retrieved from <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2020/0217/c405057-31589464.html>.
- Harmen, N. (2018). Ten of the best Chinese books in translation. Retrieved from <https://chinaexchange.uk/corefiles/ten-best-chinese-books-translation/>.
- Hu, C. J. (2020). History and surrealism in “Extraordinary Things and Spiritual Beings”: On Su Wei’s novel *Invisible Valley*. *Fiction Review*, (01), 150-158.
- Jin, H. (2018). Praise for *Invisible Valley*. Retrieved from <https://smallbeerpress.com/books/2018/04/03/the-invisible-valley/>.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lin, F., & Chen, Y. (2018). Why did the “achievements” upheld by Yale talents for years encounter a period of “cold reception”. Retrieved from https://www.sohu.com/a/242250925_639570.
- Michael, M. (2017). Actor-network theory: Old and new roots. In M. Michael, (Ed.), *Actor-Network Theory: Trials, Trails and Translations*, (pp. 10-27). California: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Su, W. (2018). *Invisible valley*. Woerner, A. (Trans.) Massachusetts: Small Beer Press.
- Su, W., Woerner, A., & Tiang, J. (2018). Chinese speculative fiction. Retrieved from <https://aaww.org/curation/chinese-speculative-fiction/>.
- Woerner, A. (2018). Interview: Austin Woerner. Retrieved from <http://samovar.strangehorizons.com/2018/04/04/interview-austin-woerner/>.
- Wolf, M. (2011) Mapping the field: Sociological perspectives on translation. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 38(1), 1-28.

Translation as a Medium of Language Contact: Evidence from Mandarin Semi-affixes

Zicheng Shao, Quangong Feng*

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: zichengshao@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] “Europeanized grammar” has become a buzzword in describing modern-day usage of Mandarin, pointing to the introduction of foreign grammatical rules into this language. This is due to the highly intensive contact between Mandarin and foreign languages. Since an important route among within this contact is translation, in this article, we aimed to explore how the recent explosive growth of semi-affixes can be attributed to translation. Therefore, we undertook a meta-analysis of Mandarin semi-affixes discussed in the papers published over the past five years by testing their degree of influence under translation, and categorized them into translation-determined, translation-influenced, and local groups. We found that the genesis of semi-affixes has developed beyond the necessity of translation and gained autonomy. Meanwhile, if translation is needed, a semantic counterpart is more likely to be found, extending the original lexical meaning instead of assigning new meanings to existing characters (e.g., via homophonic translation.) This phenomenon again supports the robustly established economic principles of language. After an analysis under the Code-Copying Framework, we noticed the different globalness levels between groups as a proof of the newly emerging autonomy in semi-affixes’ genesis, extended the definition of frequential Code-Copying, and addressed the new category of symbolic Code-Copying as a supplement to such processes to and/or from logographic languages.

[Keywords] language contact; semi-affix; Mandarin; translation; code-copying framework

Introduction

In recent years, more features from English, an Indo-European language, have been noticed in Mandarin Chinese, a Sinitic language (e.g., Fu & Ruan, 2020). This is a phenomenon (probably over-)generalized as “Europeanized grammar” of Mandarin (for a groundbreaking discussion, see Wang, 1984). Though this phenomenon is multi-source (e.g., scholar-induced, see Fu & Ruan, 2020; foreign language education-induced, see Wu, 2009; media-induced, also see Wu, 2009), a possible path is translation-induced. For example, Wang (2015) claimed that W. A. P. Martin’s translating the *Gospel of John* into Chinese marks the beginning of such a route.

This phenomenon was mostly discussed in syntactic features. Fu & Ruan (2020) pointed out instances including the preference for passive voice and less frequent omitting of subjects. In morphological features, though scholars (e.g., Xie, 1990) have touched upon the realm of affix, no known study has produced a fine-grained analysis of semi-affixes, which form a sub-category of affix and are especially known for being greatly affected by translation. For example, a semi-affix discussed by Xie (ibid.), “-ba” (-吧, a place to...) would be homophonically translated from the English word “bar” (judging criteria to be discussed). We believe that they reflect the ongoing process of language contact between Mandarin and other languages, including English.

Taking translation as a medium of language contact has been traditionally ignored by both linguists and translation scholars, but is experiencing growing interest recently (Malamatidou, 2016). Malamatidou

*Corresponding author. Email address: fengqg403@163.com

(2016) cited a number of studies examining translation as a site of language contact between English and another Indo-European language. Such contacts not only gave rise to borrowed words, but also encouraged the “development of native genres”- which House (2011) described as “a more general tendency towards subjectivity of genres (in target languages)”. It would thus have research potential to study the situation between Mandarin and English together with Mandarin and Japanese. The former two belong to different language families and have discrepant writing systems as a natural “barricade” avoiding such contact, while the latter pair (partially) share the writing system and have cognates. We would thus like to explore how the current explosive growth of semi-affix can be attributed to translation.

Therefore, in this article, we first did a meta-analysis to count the percentage each group of semi-affixes takes. The pool of examples is from related papers published over the past five years, to seek their recent innovation. After that, the Code-Copying (hereinafter referred to as CC) Framework put forward by Johanson (1999) will be applied, serving as the theoretical basis for the analysis. In this framework, Johanson (1999, p. 48) defined a continuum with four stages of CC (used to replace the traditional notion of “borrowing”), from the Model Code (i.e., “source language” in translation) into the Basic Code (i.e., “target language”), namely “momentary copy”, “habitualized copy”, “conventional copy”, and “monolingual copy”. We believe that the CC of semi-affixes into Mandarin has reached the final stage, given that those are used in purely Mandarin conversations, even without the involvement of code-switching. This proves that the CC of semi-affixes into Mandarin is already firm and prominent for studying.

Mandarin Semi-affixes

Definition

The formation of Mandarin multimorphemic words is primarily based on two methods: compounding and derivation. However, the former is more prominent since Mandarin is believed to “lack affixes” (Shao et al., 2016, p. 91) and “lack derivational change” (Yu, 2010), though Shao et al. (2016, p.91) noted that Mandarin is “relatively rich in semi-affixes”.

Firstly, the distinction between Mandarin affixes and semi-affixes should be made. The former are defined as “highly grammaticalized word-forming elements that must be dependent on roots and are abstract in meaning” (Yu, 2010). In comparison, Haspelmath and Sims’ definition (2010, p. 19) of a universal affix is that it “attaches to a word or a main part of a word. It usually has an abstract meaning, and an affix cannot occur by itself”. Yu’s judgment on Mandarin affixes emphasizes the dynamic change, i.e., “grammaticalization”. This provides the ground for the definition of semi-affixes: according to Shao et al. (2016, pp. 91-92), their process of grammaticalization is “not complete”. However, they are “highly productive in word formation”, and are “going on a process of generalization in combination with other elements”. Thus, the distinction between semi-affixes and affixes in Mandarin is their degree of grammaticalization. An example from each category is given:

Table 1. Comparison of Mandarin Semi-Affix “ke-” and Affix “-zi”

Element	Lexical meaning	Word	Gloss	*G
ke- (可)	can	ke-kao (可靠)	reliable/ can be relied on	+
		ke-ai (可爱)	cute	++
		ke-xiao (可笑)	amusing	++
		ke-xin (可信)	credible/ can be believed in	+
		ke-qin (可亲)	amiable	++
-zi (子)	respected scholar/son/son and (or) daughter (an archaic usage)	nan-zi (男子)	man	++
		hai-zi (孩子)	child	++
		qi-zi (妻子)	wife	++
		mao-zi (帽子)	hat	++
		shao-zi (勺子)	spoon	++

Note: “G” stands for “grammaticalization”. “+” means “partially grammaticalized” while “++” means “fully/highly grammaticalized”.

It shows that only partial words formed from ke- can be interpreted by “can”, the original lexical meaning, while others can’t. This shows that semi-affixes are still in the process of grammaticalization with an internal gradient of grammaticalized degree. In contrast, -zi is fully grammaticalized, meaning “related to a human being”, or even a meaningless element only to form a second syllable (i.e., the case of “hat” and “spoon”), with completely no relation with the original lexical meaning of “scholar” or “offspring”.

Quantity and Productivity

The number of semi-affixes in Mandarin varies depending on strictness of the definition. Chen Guanglei (1994, p. 27) listed 74, Ma Qingzhu claimed there to be 57, Zhang Bin even noted 94 (see Yu, 2010). What’s more, as was mentioned earlier, since semi-affixes are related to neologism, their genesis is a productive process as well (Yuan, & Yan, 2022, p. 353).

Productivity is a distinctive feature of Mandarin semi-affixes in comparison to affixes (Wang, 2007). Semi-affixes could attach to almost all elements to form neologisms with no overt restrictions while in almost all cases, affixes are only attached to form set words (e.g., 1a). Even possible combinations following a highly similar pattern (e.g., 1b) seldom work:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>(1a) 老- 虎
lao hu
animal tiger
“tiger”</p> | <p>(1b) *老- 羊
lao yang
animal sheep
“sheep”</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|

In comparison, semi-affixes are more flexible in their combination with other elements, and are thus more productive. Cases of -zu (-族, people who do...) are presented to show that this semi-affix (recognized by Yuan, & Yan, 2022) could attach to roots derived from words of various word classes to form a nominal word.

Table 2. Examples of Roots of Different Word-Classes Combining with -zu

Root	Word-class	Token	Gloss
di-tie	noun	di-tie-zu (地铁族)	people who take the metro everyday
shang-ban	verb/VP	shang-ban-zu (上班族)	people who go to work
kang-fen	adjective	kang-fen-zu (亢奋族)	people who always get excited

Semi-affixes as Products of Translation-induced Language Contact

In the previous section, we have seen that semi-affixes are less constrained in genesis and usage, and are thus less “conventional”. A hypothesis is due to its exotic origin. To verify this, we planned to test a well-established list, e.g., the 74 semi-affixes listed by Chen (1994). However, all the existing lists were compiled no later than 2002, and, relatively speaking, are now too old, considering the recent boom of semi-affixes in the era of the internet and social media. Interestingly, some of the newly generated semi-affixes are from Japanese, complicating the legitimacy of the notion “Europeanized”: examples include “-kong” (控, people love something extremely), which is from “コン”, as was discussed by Jiao (2023).

Since a newer list is not known to us, we did a small meta-analysis, including all the research papers published over the past five years (i.e., 2018-2023) retrieved from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), one of the most authoritative Chinese databases for such publications. We included all the semi-affixes that were discussed and categorized them into different groups before reaching the findings.

Types of Semi-affixes

Before categorizing, we would like to define the three groups and our judging criteria.

Group 1 is “translation determined”, typically homophonically translated (i.e., the traditional notion of “transliteration”). As was mentioned earlier, -ba would belong to this group in that: 1) meaning “a place of...” is not the conventional meaning of “ba”; 2) it is a (near) homophone to the English word “bar”; 3) the meaning “a place of...” can be derived (generalization in this case) from its English counterpart “bar”, i.e., “a place to drink alcoholic beverage”, but not the Mandarin character. Therefore, the three judging criteria for translation determined semi-affixes would be: 1) don’t carry a conventional Mandarin meaning (to be verified in *Modern Chinese Lexicon Dictionary*’s first version, 1978. This is the most authoritative lexical dictionary for Mandarin, and its first version was published before the massive introduction of foreign languages into Chinese society); 2) is a counterpart (homophonic, unrelated semantic, or the same character in most Japanese-origin cases) of an element (word, affix, etc.) in another language; 3) has a derivable meaning from its other-language counterpart but not the Mandarin element. For those semantically translated in this group, an example will be “-men” (门, “scandal related to...”), which is from the English element “gate”, as in “Watergate”. Though it was not homophonically translated and the character used is a semantic counterpart of “door” (gate), the latter is not the meaning of this semi-affix and its genesis can’t be traced back within Mandarin. Therefore, we still include such examples in this group.

In comparison, another type of translation-induced semi-affixes is found to have more connection with the original Mandarin lexical meaning. Cases including “-hua” (化, turn into) form Group 2. We found that: 1) serving as a (semi-) suffix is not the conventional usage of “hua”; 2) being a suffix while meaning “turn into” is identical to an English element, i.e., “-ize” (e.g., grammaticalize); 3) the meaning “turn into” of “-hua” can derive from the traditional lexical meaning of “hua” (change). Therefore, such a group is largely semantically similar to its other-language counterparts while keeping more roots in Mandarin. We would say that the translation process added and promotes their usage as semi-affixes and would thus call them

“translation-influenced” semi-affixes, which is supported by Ding et al. (see Yu, 2010). Likewise, the three judging criteria are: 1) don’t have a conventional Mandarin usage (also verified in *Modern Chinese Lexicon Dictionary*’s first version); 2) usage is identical or highly similar to an element in another language; 3) has a similar meaning with its counterpart in another language and a derivable meaning from the Mandarin lexical meaning.

The remaining ones can hardly find their roots in another language and are thus less likely to be translation-induced. Examples include “-huo” (货, a person who [negatively] does something). Those would be classified into Group 3, the “local” one, which is identical to the “self-origin” type defined by Yu (2010).

Categorization

Forty-eight semi-affixes were found in the research articles regarding Mandarin semi-affixes published between 2018 and 2023, which were categorized into three groups below:

Table 3. *Categorization of Semi-affixes Discussed in Literature between 2018 and 2023*

	Number	Percentage	Example
Group 1	6	12.5	“-xiu” (秀, show)
Group 2	10	20.8	“qing-” (轻, light)
Group 3	32	66.7	“-shou” (手, a person who does...)

Observation and Discussion

Though Group 1 semi-affixes, especially homophonically translated ones, have brought the most attention to scholars, we found that they are relatively small in number among the recent innovation of semi-affixes. In contrast, Group 3 ones, i.e., local ones take two-thirds of all the instances. Therefore, we can conclude that though the booming of semi-affixes has been traditionally attributed to the “Europeanized”, or “foreign” grammar, in recent years, their genesis has been localized, and no longer takes the translation process as a must. We would thus propose that it was not only foreign elements that were “translated” into Mandarin, but also the word-formation rules, making their geneses more productive. This phenomenon further verifies our claim that semi-affixes in Mandarin have reached the “monolingual copy” stage and confirms House’s viewpoint regarding the “tendency towards subjectivity in the genres” (2011).

While conducting the meta-analysis, a phenomenon caught our attention. Niu (2021) mentioned that the semi-affix “-ka” (咖) has its root in the Southern Min language, another Sinitic language spoken originated from the southern part of Fujian Province, China. Southern Min is not a “foreign language” but is typologically different from Mandarin. We also categorized this example into Group 1, i.e., translation-determined ones considering that it is a homophonic counterpart of the Southern Min word [k^hA⁵⁵], which is the cognate of the Mandarin word “jue” (脚), both literally meaning “a person who does...”. However, such a meaning is not carried by the Mandarin word “ka”, and the modern-day meaning of semi-affix “-ka” was introduced from the Southern Min word [k^hA⁵⁵]. A tricky question would thus be raised: Is the transformation within Sinitic languages, which use the same (or at least highly similar) writing system and are largely literally mutually intelligible (but obviously not verbally) considered as “translation”? However, this question goes beyond the focus of this article. Here, we temporarily used the concept of “translating”, considering that Southern Min is a different language (i.e., “Chinese dialect”) to Mandarin.

The bidirectional nature of translation made recognizing Group 2 semi-affixes difficult. Take semi-affix “yun-” (云, literally ‘cloud’, “online”) as an example, Zhan and Chen (2023) claimed that its origin

was the English phrase “cloud computing”, plausibly marking its exotic origin. However, it was also mentioned that during the pandemic of COVID-19, new phrases with both “yun-” and “cloud X” boomed in respective languages due to practical needs. Despite this, the authors didn’t verify which language translated such terms from the other – or it’s possible that both languages created them simultaneously. Considering that those neologisms were mostly created online, tracing back their geneses is complicated.

A Code-Copying Framework Analysis

Global-ness in Code-Copying of Mandarin Semi-affixes

In his CC Framework, Johanson (1999, p. 65) confirmed four properties of CC, namely “material” - regarding “phonic aspects” (Malamatidou, 2016), “semantic” - regarding “denotative and connotative meanings” (ibid.), “combinational” – regarding collocational patterns and syntax (ibid.), and “frequential” – regarding frequency of using an existing element (ibid.). Any CC that includes all four properties is a global one while all others are selective ones. An observation is that the three Groups of semi-affixes are idiosyncratic in satisfying the four categories, i.e., having a different global-ness level. We compiled the data into the following table:

Table 4. *Three Groups of Semi-affixes’ Contrasts in Satisfying CC Categories*

	Material	Semantic	Combinational	Frequential
Group 1	+/-	+	N/A	N/A
Group 2	-	+/-	+	+
Group 3	-	-	+/-	+

Since all known Group 1 semi-affixes are newly introduced through translation, combinational and frequency properties are not applicable. Besides this, we found that:

1. Group 3 semi-affixes receive the least influence under translation among the three groups, i.e., are the most selective in CC. In contrast, Group 1 ones are the most global. It is noteworthy that Malamatidou (2016) mentioned one flaw of the CC Framework: it can’t deny the possibility that target languages independently develop features identical to those copied ones. In this case, it’s possible that only the development of Groups 1 & 2 semi-affixes is attributed to translation, while Group 3 ones are pre-existent and developed individually, but happen to “look like” those translation-induced semi-affixes. However, the more frequent usage of Group 1 & 2 ones, or the assumed “translation-induced” ones, would indirectly promote the usage of Group 3 ones, which is not fully identical to the situation discussed in the CC Framework;

2. The frequential feature is the most adaptable one among the four while the material one is the strictest. In fact, Malamatidou (2016) even claimed that material-type selective CC is impossible. We believe that since the CC Framework was established mostly based on copies within Indo-European languages, finding cognates is possible (however, they may be less frequently used in language B, which is possibly the reason why the frequential property was comparatively universal). In contrast, CC between language families makes finding cognates (largely) impossible. In situations like copying into Mandarin, a language with a logographic writing system, the solution is usually homophonic translation by finding similarly or identically pronounced characters, as in the case of some Group 1

semi-affixes, resulting in the copying of the material feature where the frequential feature is not applicable. Thus, we believe more studies are needed regarding the material feature in CC into logographic languages.

More on Frequential Code-Copying

Notably, Group 2 semi-affixes, i.e., the translation-influenced type, can be used to extend the Frequential CC category. Instances in this group were not conventionally semi-affixes, which is idiosyncratic to “existing” in such copying’s definition. Therefore, such a notion may possibly need to include the simultaneous influence of other CC categories.

Regarding Frequential CC, Steiner (2008, p. 322) mentioned that “different frequencies and proportionalities of native patterns often result in texts having a certain non-native quality”, which can be proved by Group 2 semi-affixes. Cases in such group, e.g., “-xing” (性, having a property of...), have long been judged, or even criticized, as examples of “translationese” (e.g., Wang & Xu, 2018). We, as native speakers of Mandarin, personally believe that such translationese is not even identical within the group. For example, we consider words formed with -hua as more “foreign” compared to those with -xing. This can be used to reveal the continuum of subjectivity, or autonomy, between the highly translation-dependent Group 1 and the natively originated Group 3.

Symbolic Code-Copying

As was mentioned earlier, CC into logographic languages can’t be well-explained by CC Framework. Meanwhile, a special type, i.e., CC from (at least partially) logographic language A to B, can barely be accounted for by such a framework. Examples found here would be CC from Japanese into Mandarin, where linguistic symbols (i.e., characters) are copied directly. We gave this new type the name “Symbolic Code-Copying”, which is similar to the four existing ones. Meanwhile, CC into logographic languages will be defined as “partial-symbolic CC”.

Such cases are those Japanese-origin Group 1 semi-affixes, which take a high percentage within the group. In comparison, those homophonically translated ones (usually from English) are fewer in number. Since kanji, the local version of Chinese characters, is used in Japanese, some copied elements simply choose the corresponding Chinese characters while using their Mandarin pronunciation. For example, the Japanese element “宅” (/taku/) has been borrowed into Mandarin as a semi-affix, meaning “related to staying at home (lazily)”. However, instead of finding a homophonic counterpart of “/taku/”, such a semi-affix kept the identical logographic shape, but is pronounced in its Mandarin way, i.e., “zhai” (ʈʂai³⁵). Therefore, since a Mandarin character is usually a combination of meaning and sound (Shao et al., p. 47), semantic and material CC would usually be mutually exclusive as a supplement to symbolic CC (the latter is so far only found in partial-symbolic CC).

We propose that the preference for symbolic type CC is due to the conservativeness caused by the Chinese writing system as a medium between meaning and pronunciation. Group 1 is the only set that includes introducing completely new usages, while semi-affixes of the other two groups more or less have roots in Mandarin. Therefore, if translation is needed, people tend to find a semantic counterpart, i.e., as in the situation of Group 2, to avoid introducing new meanings to an existing character, following Occam’s razor. Meanwhile, since kanjis are from Chinese characters, and have linkages to their Chinese counterparts, borrowing the character directly would avoid the transforming process, and add a (distantly) deducible meaning to the original element. We could conclude from this that the introduction of semi-affixes follows

the economic principles of language: if the translating process is needed, the choice tends to adhere to the existing meaning, instead of creating completely new meaning(s).

Conclusion

In this article, we first introduced the widely and well-discussed phenomenon of “Europeanized grammar”, which is, in fact, a process largely due to the intensive contact between Mandarin and foreign languages. Among them, the genesis of semi-affixes has not been systematically discussed and categorized, and their linkage with translation hasn’t been properly analyzed.

Semi-affixes play an important part in Mandarin derivational word formation and are typical examples of “Europeanized grammar” in Mandarin. They are productive as they are flexible in combining with various roots to form neologisms, booming in number under the internet era, and are only partially grammaticalized compared to the “more conventional” affixes. As a grammatical element not existent in English and traditionally not prominent in Mandarin, the genesis of semi-affixes should be largely attributed to language contact, and such a process is prominently done via translation.

To find out how translation contributed to the genesis and development of semi-affixes, we conducted a meta-analysis of newly discussed (mostly newly emerged) semi-affixes. Forty-eight instances were found in the literature of the past 5 years, and among them 2/3 belong to the local group, which was generated without overt foreign influence, showing that such word formation has been deeply rooted in Mandarin and developed beyond the necessity of translation. For those generated via translation, 62.5% were translation-influenced, only extending the original lexical meaning with a new explanation. Meanwhile, the others, in the minority, were “translation determined”, attributing a new element to the language. This supports the economic principles of language, i.e., not adding superfluous entities.

After a Code-Copying Framework analysis, we found that the three groups of semi-affixes have different degrees of global-ness, with Group 1 being the most global while Group 3 is selective. Frequential was shown to be the most adaptive CC category among the four in our examples. Our research acknowledged the “translationese” brought by such change while extending the notion of “existing” in its definition. A new category, “symbolic”, was brought up as a supplement to the uncovered situation which includes CC to and/or from logographic languages. In such cases, preference for those directly using the corresponding Chinese character of the Japanese kanji also showed the conservativity of the logographic writing system.

In the future, diachronic research can be done to test whether the proportion of different groups of semi-affixes have undergone a dynamic change, e.g., whether Group 1 semi-affixes were prominent when translation-induced semi-affixes were first introduced into Mandarin.

References

- Chen, G. (1994). *Chinese lexicology*, (p. 27). Shanghai: Xuelin Press.
- Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. (1978). *Modern Chinese lexicon dictionary (1st ed.)*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Fu, J, & Ruan, Y. (2020). Linguistic features of Europeanized Mandarin and its norm. *Contemporary Foreign Language Studies*, 6, 121-127+142.
- Haspelmath, M, & Sims, A. D. (2010). *Understanding morphology (2nd ed.)*, (p. 19). London: Hodder Education.

- House, J. (2011). Using translation and parallel text corpora to investigate the influence of global English on textual norms in other languages. In A. Kruger, K. Wallmach, & J. Munday, (Eds.), *Corpus-Based Translation Studies: Research and Applications*, (pp. 187-208). London: Bloomsbury.
- Jiao, L. (2023). A discussion on the tendency of subjectivity in human-related affixes: An example of semi-affix “-kong”. *JinGu Creative Literature*, 20, 127-130.
- Johanson, L. (1999). The dynamics of code-copying in language encounters. In B. Brendemoen, E. Lanza, & E. Ryen, (Eds.), *Language Encounters Across Time and Space*, (pp. 37-61). Oslo: Novus Press.
- Malamatidou, S. (2016). Understanding translation as a site of language contact: The potential of the code. *Target*, 28(3), 399-423.
- Niu, J. (2021). A discussion on features of the internet neologism “X-ka” and its origin. *Sinogram Culture*, 19, 15-17.
- Shao, J. et al. (2016). *An introduction to modern Chinese* (3rd ed.), (pp. 47, 91-92). Shanghai: Shanghai Educational Publishing House.
- Steiner, E. (2008). Empirical studies of translations as a mode of language contact: “Explicitness” of lexicogrammatical encoding as a relevant dimension. In P. Siemund, & N. Kintana, (Eds.), *Language Contact and Contact Languages*, (pp. 317-345). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Wang, J. (2015). A discussion on gospel of John (Mandarin version) translated by W. A. P. Martin and the origin of Europeanized written Mandarin. *Foreign Languages Research*, 32(6), 83-88+104.
- Wang, J., & Xu, J. (2018). Motivations for translationese in E-C technical translation. *Translation Research and Teaching*, 1, 47-52.
- Wang, L. (1984). *Chinese grammatical theories*. Jinan: Shandong Education Press.
- Wu, W. (2009). On the rhetorical function of Europeanized Chinese. *Journal of Jiangxi Agricultural University*, 8(4), 150-153.
- Xie, Y. (1990). *A review on Europeanized grammar in modern Chinese*. Hong Kong: Kwong Ming Book Store.
- Yu, Y. (2010). Study on semi-affix of Mandarin Chinese. (M.A. Thesis, Yanbian University).
- Yuan, H., & Yan, L. (2022). Morpheme Zú “tribe” in Mandarin Chinese. In M. Dong, Y. Gu, & J. F. Hong, (Eds.), *Chinese Lexical Semantics*, CLSW 2021, pp.353-369.
- Zhan, L. & Chen, C. (2023). A Chinese-English comparative study on “Yun” in “Yun-X” words. *Journal of Mianyang Teachers' College*, 42(06), 67-74.

A Diachronic Study on the Translation of “道” in Taoist Philosophy

Shiyu Zhang, Quangong Feng*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email:3210103536@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] As the source of Chinese Taoist philosophy and an important part of Chinese ideology and culture, *Tao Te Ching* has been highly valued by the Western world. The translation of “道” by Western translators has been varying with the change of historical periods and the in-depth understanding of Chinese culture. However, in this process, the translation of “道” has always been closely related to the Christian culture from the equivalence between “道” and “God”, to the association of “道” and “Way”, and finally the applying of transliteration. By studying the translation process of “道” and the reasons behind it, we can further understand the differences and connections between Chinese and Western religious cultures.

[Keywords] *Tao Te Ching*; 道; translation; Taoist philosophy

Introduction

Chinese people emphasize “intuition” and are accustomed to using a concept-free, non-indirect, and non-reflective method in order to comprehend and understand things better. The unique implicit and euphemistic expression style of the Chinese people is reflected in numerous literary works, such as ancient Chinese poetry. Taoism, as a native philosophy of China, also exhibits characteristics of ambiguity due to its own mystery and the inheritance of Taoist culture. As an important source of Taoist philosophy, many terms in *Tao Te Ching* have semantic ambiguity and uncertainty. Since the culture-loaded words in it have almost no equivalent vocabulary in English, there are enormous problems in translating the *Tao Te Ching*, especially its key terms.

During the process of translating *Tao Te Ching*, numerous versions have emerged, and different versions have different translation methods for the core term “道 (Dao)”. These translations are closely related to the cultural background at the time, the author’s personal interpretation, and Christianity and *The Bible*. Initially, like the translations of the Buddhist scriptures when they were first introduced to China, Western translators also used the method of “Ge-yi: the equivalence of different concepts” for the translation of “道”. Many Western translators believe that there are similarities between “道” and “God” in terms of both expressive meaning and positioning. Therefore, the translation of “Dao” is often associated with “God”. As history advanced, western translators’ understanding of “道” deepened, and they began to boldly choose transliteration to give “道” a more precise and proper translation. By tracing the history of the translation of “道,” whether it is the relationship between “道” and God, the relationship between *The Bible* and *Tao Te Ching* in the eyes of Westerners, or the differences in religious philosophy between East and West, we can gain some insights into intercultural communication.

Early Translations: The Equivalence between “道” and God

In the middle of the 19th century, with the expansion of Western powers, missionaries and diplomats were among the first to come into contact with traditional Chinese classics and became the main force in translating *Tao Te Ching*. However, due to their lack of systematic understanding of the cultural imagery

¹*Corresponding author. Email address: fenggg403@163.com

and spiritual essence behind *Tao Te Ching*, their translations relied heavily on Western religious and philosophical concepts. According to statistics, nearly 45% of translators used Western religious and philosophical concepts to translate “道” (He, & Zhou, 2022), making it the most commonly used approach in early translations of “道”.

Translators who were greatly influenced by Western Christian thought during this period included G. G. Alexander and E. H. Parker. In 1895, Alexander translated “道” as “God” in *Laoz-Tsze. The Great Thinker with a Translation of His Thought on the Nature and Manifestations of God* and used the pronoun “He” to refer to “道”, completely equating it with the “God” who creates and rules over all creation in Christianity (He, & Zhou, 2022).

E. H. Parker’s translations were greatly influenced by Pierre Hoang, a Chinese Catholic priest of the late Qing Dynasty, whose interpretations of Chinese religion and philosophy were based on Catholic theology; E. H. Parker held Pierre Hoang in high esteem and corresponded with him on many occasions (Li, 2019). Therefore, he also tried to find a substitute for “道” from Western religions. He translated it as “Providence” (He, & Zhou, 2022). According to *Etymology Dictionary*, the term “Providence” (usually capitalized) means “God as beneficent caretaker of his creatures,” and dates back to around 1600. It originated from its earlier usage to describe “God’s beneficent care, guardianship, or guidance” (in the late 14th century, abbreviated as divine providence, etc.). In classical Latin, this noun was occasionally used as a goddess’s name and later in Late Latin as “God; the government of the world by God’s infinite wisdom and foresight.” Thus, in Western religions, “Providence” refers to both God and God’s will.

However, the term “God” can be given a concrete physical image such as in medieval and Renaissance paintings. On the other hand, the connotation of “道” cannot be fully expressed in words and it is difficult to visualize. So why was the choice made to equate the God in Christianity with “道”?

The first reason is the influence of the Vernacular Union Version of *The Bible*. In the translation of *Tao Te Ching*, James Legge once made significant contributions. He was a missionary of the London Missionary Society and had been preaching in China for many years. During his time in China, he collaborated with Wang Tao on the translation of various ancient classics. After returning to England, he became the first professor of Chinese studies at the University of Oxford between 1876 and 1897. It is recorded that Legge also participated in the translation of the Chinese version of *The Bible* called “Delegates’ Version”. This translation specifically unified important concepts and names. In 1890, Protestant Christian missionary organizations in China proposed the principle of “one *Bible* in three versions” (Yang Huilin, 2009). This led to the creation of the Vernacular Union Version, which further popularized the translated contents. One familiar phrase from the original text and its translation is:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

太初有道,道与神同在,道就是神。

This translation has had a profound influence on subsequent generations and is used in both the Chinese New Version (CNV) and the Chinese Standard Bible (CSB). The theologian and *Bible* translator Lv Zhenzhong also incorporated “道” into his translation, rendering it as “起初有道, 道与上帝同在, 道是上帝之真体”. However, tracing back to its original source, the translation in the restored version reads, “太初有话, 话与神同在, 话就是神”.

In the Christian faith, God is depicted as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three in one. God is a Trinity: The Father is the source and lord of all creation, the Son is the Jesus Christ who came into the world as the Word from the beginning, and the Holy Spirit operates within all things and within the Church by

the mission of the Father. These are the three persons of God. The phrase “the Word was God” in the original text indicates that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the divine word, the second person of God, who communicates God’s message to humanity for their redemption. Therefore, the Word has been personified. The Vernacular Union Version of The Bible associates the Chinese term “道” with the English term “the Word” and directly equates “道” with the “God” in Christianity, possibly to make the translation more culturally characteristic of China and to make the believers in China more convinced. However, this translation almost deviates from the original intent of *The Bible*, and it causes “道” to lose its original meaning due to over-domestication.

The second reason is the partial understanding of the connotation of “道”. Parker believed that both from the term “Providence” itself and from the qualities possessed by Christians or rulers who believe in God, “Providence” is highly consistent with what Laozi refers to as “道”.

In *Tao Te Ching*, it states: “Out of Tao, One is born; Out of One, Two; Out of Two, Three; Out of Three, the created universe.”² This reflects the supreme position of “道”, which nurtures and sustains all things and is the source of everything. Similarly, in *The Bible*, there are similar textual expressions:

In Genesis 1:1, it says: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

《创世纪》1-1: “起初神创造天地。”

From the perspective of Western translators, the first sentence of *The Bible* indicates that God created everything in this world, which is exactly the same as the portrayal of “道” creating all things in *Tao Te Ching*. However, the Chinese concept of “道” is not just the source of all things, nor is it limited to Tai Shang Lao Jun. It is a term created by the Chinese people in their process of understanding nature, encompassing the laws of celestial and earthly movements, the changes of things, and containing dialectical thinking, among others. It is not something that can be summarized as a religious anthropomorphism.

The third reason is the influence of the origin of words. The Chinese translation of “God” – 上帝 actually originated in Taoist culture. In *The Book of Chow · Zhaogao*, it is said that “The God of Heaven changed the head of the world to end the blessed fate of the great country of Yin.”³ In the oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang Dynasty (BC1600-BC1049) and the bronze inscriptions of the Zhou Dynasty (BC1036-BC256), “Emperor (帝)” is also called “God (神)” and “Heaven (天)”. In oracle bone inscriptions, “Heaven (天)” is interlinked with the word “Shang (上)” or “Da (大)”. The Early “God”, with a strong personal connotation of God, is presented in works such as *The Book of Chow · Shang Book · Yi Discipline Fourth*: “The life given by the God is not constant, and if you do more good deeds, God will send down good fortune; if you do too much evil, it will send down disaster.”⁴ The belief in the personal God of Heaven was inherited by Taoism and developed into “the supreme God of Heaven, the supreme God of Nature and Mira, the supreme Jade Emperor”⁵, namely the Jade Emperor.

The word “God” in *The Bible* comes from the Hebrew word “Elohim”, which is the supreme God of Christianity. When Matteo Ricci preached to Confucian scholar-bureaucrats, in order to make Chinese people better understand the meaning of “God”, he chose to describe this concept in the existing Chinese vocabulary. They believe that the word “上帝” is not only the name of the Chinese sect for the destiny, but also the name of the highest God among the people, which is exactly the same as the meaning expressed in

² Lin Yutang’s version. The original text is “道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物”.

³ Author’s version. The original text is “皇天上帝改厥元子兹大国殷之命”, which comes from 《尚书·召诰》.

⁴ Author’s version. The original text is “惟皇上帝不常,作善降之百祥,作不善降之百殃”, which comes from 《尚书》 “商书·伊训第四”.

⁵ The original text is “昊天金阙无上至尊自然妙有弥罗至尊玉皇上帝”.

The Bible, so they apply “上帝” to the process of dissemination. Because of the use of the name of an existing deity in Taoism, in a sense, it has a similar meaning to the use of “Baal” to address my Lord. “天主” also comes from the Chinese. *Records of the Grand Historian: The Book of Fengchan*: “The eight gods, one is called Deus, and the temple is Tianqi.”⁶ Here, “天主” is called “Deus” (陡司).

These words, which are closely related to Western religions, are derived from Chinese culture. The connection between “道” and “God”, in a sense, returns to the situation of mutual interpretation of the two concepts of Taoism. This will undoubtedly cause confusion in the target language readers and confusion in the source language readers.

In the Middle Period, “道” and God’s Guide to the Right Path.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the two world wars made Westerners pay more attention to the East and China, trying to find a solution to the plight of Western civilization from Eastern culture. More Western sinologists, translators, and overseas Chinese scholars became involved in the translation of *Tao Te Ching*. However, the translations of “道” still bore some influence from Christianity (He, & Zhou, 2022).

Arthur Waley, a renowned British sinologist, translated “道” as “the Way” in his version of *Tao Te Ching*:

The Way and Its Power

《道德经》

Without leaving his door, he knows everything under heaven.

Without looking out of his window, he knows all the ways of heaven.

不出户，知天下；不窥牖，见天道。

He believed that “道” encompassed the meanings of path, method, principle, and even the way the universe operates. He saw similarities between the mystical aspects of Taoism and the metaphysical concepts in Christianity (He, & Zhou, 2022).

Similarly, in *the Gospel of John*, Chapter 14, verses 4-6, Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Here, “Way” refers to the correct path guided by Jesus and becomes the supreme guidance leading to truth, goodness, and beauty (Xiao, & Sun, 2009). The connotations of “the Way” align with the guiding role and supreme status of “道” in Taoism. However, it is important to note that while “the Way” expresses some of the nuances of “道”, in contrast, “道” emphasizes the state of selflessness and personal cultivation to achieve salvation. The ultimate goal of Taoism is to attain immortality through the pursuit of the Great Dao, with “道” serving as the driving force for individuals, providing guidance and motivation to reach a state of desirelessness and freedom. God is not the central focus in Taoism. In Christianity, “God” emphasizes “I”, the individual’s desire for a transcendent shore, emphasizes the external power, that is, “God” to save themselves, and puts the status of God to the highest point. Waley’s translation of *Tao Te Ching* was made in the period of conformity to the West, when the West was seizing Chinese culture. From the perspective of the target language readers, Waley’s choice of “Way” did indeed help the target language readers understand better. However, it deviated from the original meaning of *Tao Te Ching*. He believed that there were certain similarities between the two, but cultural differences create a certain gap between them. Waley tried to get rid of the influence of the earlier period (the period of Christianization), but he did not escape the Christian notion of transcendence that added extraneous cultural assumptions to Chinese

⁶ Author’s version. The original text is “八神,一曰天主,祠天齐”,which comes from 《史记·封禅书》.

thought, so that the translated text was characterized by his own country's culture and lost the local cultural flavor inherent in the source text.

Later Period: The Separation and Difference between “道” and God

In the second half of the twentieth century, the communication between China and the West increased, and Western Sinology developed vigorously. In addition, the ancient document *Tao Te Ching*, unearthed twice in Chinese archaeological circles, once again prompted a large number of overseas Chinese scholars, sinologists and translators to translate it (He, & Zhou, 2022). During this period, with the growing strength of China and the strengthening of cultural transmission between China and the West, most scholars realized the connotation of Laozi's “道”, believing that it was difficult to express its connotation only by equating or combining it with Western religions, so they adopted the transliteration method and translated it as “Dao”.

Actually, before that, James Legge had adopted the method of returning to the original Chinese translation of “道”. Legge's interpretation of “道” as the core concept of Taoism has always been very cautious, and he tried to avoid using any Western words to translate it. He tried to make several points, and the first one is that “道” is not a personal God (Pan, 2017). This undoubtedly draws a clear line between “道” and “God”. In his translation of *Tao Te Ching*, he often explained it with reference to Christian classics in his annotations. This translation was later included in the third volume of *The Sacred Books of the East*. It was Max Muller, the founder of the academic study of Western religion (*Religionswissenschaft*), who edited this set of Oriental Holy Books. Based on his own understanding of Taoist culture, James Legge added a detailed annotation after the translation of the chapter “道可道” and named it “embodying the Tao” (Yang Huilin, 2009). Here, he translated “道” as “Tao”. James Legge's *Tao Te Ching* is included in *The Sacred Books of the East*, which proves that the status of *Tao Te Ching* is different from the western holy book, *The Bible*, and “道”, which is also in the highest position, naturally has the same status as God. In *The Bible*, there are ten commandments, of which the first and third commandments actually clarify the difference between “道” and God to some extent.

The first commandment: You shall have no other gods before me.

第一诫 除了我以外,你不可有别的神。

The third commandment: You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

第三诫 不可妄称耶和华你神的名; 因为妄称耶和华名的, 耶和华必不以他为无罪。

It can be seen from the third commandment that Christians cannot directly call God by his name. Similarly, in the translation of *Tao Te Ching*, “道”, which has the same status as God, cannot be translated with words related to such words as “God”. As a devout Christian, this creed would naturally make James Legge use other translation options. Therefore, as he said, “The best way to translate ‘道’ is to appropriate it into the translation, rather than looking for an equivalent English word.”⁷ If it is directly translated as “God”, it is undoubtedly a blasphemy.

The first commandment clarifies the differences between Taoism and Christianity. “No other gods” of the first commandment shows that Jehovah is required to assert and defend his own uniqueness, universality, Creatorship, and covenant with humanity: He is the only God. Taoism, on the other hand, has the characteristics of personification and polytheism. Some of the 72 gods are fictional personal gods such as the Jade Emperor, some are historical figures such as Guan Gong, and many Buddhist figures such as

⁷ *The Sacred Books of China*, the Texts of Taoism, translated by James Legge, pp. 12-13.

Tathagata and Guanyin are also included in the Taoist deities. Just as the core of Taoism is the concept of immortality, the pursuit of immortality has become the most extensive folk belief in China. The Chinese people have always emphasized the worship of “heaven (天)”. For thousands of years, the Chinese people have recognized “heaven (天)” as the ultimate existence, the world as “places under the heaven (天下)”, human nature as “kindness of the heaven(天良)”, the monarch as “son of the heaven (天子)”, and the origin and truth of all things as “Dao of the heaven (天道)” and so on. In Chinese conceptualizations, “God” is more of a “higher wisdom” that comprehends the law of the operation of heaven, and this kind of “higher wisdom” can also be any one of Bodhisattvas, Buddhas or immortals.

At the same time, James Legge believed that “道” was the highest ideal of Laozi, which could only be achieved by both internal and external cultivation, and that one of the media and methods to understand “道” was to embody, which he believed was similar to the understanding of God. He quoted a sentence from *The Bible* to illustrate the connection between the two: “Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (Yang, 2009) He believed that “love” is an explicit form of God, and having love is a way to approach God. It can also be confirmed from the side that he understood “道” as an untouchable God, who needs to rely on some “external forces” to touch and approach, or to obtain.

Conclusion

From the diachronic translation of “道”, some religious and philosophical differences could be inferred. The first difference lies in the status of humanity. Unlike Taoism, which regards “道” as a man’s infinite quest for himself, in the western traditional religion, as Feuerbach said, the wealth of God is at the expense of the poverty of man. The emphasis on the otherness of God and man often means ignoring the identity of God and man. Human beings believe in God aiming for the highest good and make God exist, but in the end they find that God is far away from human beings; human beings accept God’s favor in order to make people strong and save themselves, but they find that they are victims of the altar because of their own insignificance.

The second difference lies in the relationship between man and nature. In western religion, there is the embodiment of “transcending spirit”, that is, God transcends everything. God is above humanity, and the soul is above the body. God created everything, regarding the relationship between nature and human beings as horizontal, and human beings can conquer nature; a supposition that has become a factor in the destruction of nature in modern times. In China, “heaven” is just a part of nature; nature is greater than anything else, and man is also only a part of nature. The concept of “harmony between man and nature” can bring sustainable development to mankind.

The third difference lies in the final goal. Taoism expects to achieve the state of “desire for nothing” through self-improvement. “Desire for nothing” is not to have no desire at all, but to understand abstinence. Western religions, on the other hand, put more emphasis on “desire”. The world is unique to God, people will desire to have the opportunity to enter heaven. War, killing and plundering are all for possession and satisfaction of desire.

All things in the world can be abstracted and summarized as “being”, and the dialectical and unified movement of “being” and “non-being” is the “Great Tao”. The change of existence is the source of all things in the world, which is the Chinese culture of “Tao gives birth to all things”. Chinese culture emphasizes selflessness (无私), non-competition (无争), non-action (无为), non-soldiering (无兵), non-strength (无强), and non-nobility (无贵), and is a culture of dialectical unity.

References

- He, H., & Zhou, G. (2022). A study on the diachronic evolution and motivation of the English translation of Tao Te Ching: Based on the statistics and analysis of the English translation of the core concept “Dao”. *Language and Translation*, (04), 56-61.
- Li, Q. (2019). An analysis of the relationship between Pierre Hoang and British sinologist Edward Harper Parker’s writings on Chinese religions. *International Sinology*, (02), 35-44 +203.
- Pan, L. (2017). James Legge’s study of Taoism and its transformation. *Religious Studies*, (02), 25-31.
- Xiao, S., & Sun, H. (2009). The approach to translate “Dao”, and “Dao” can also be told of – On the translation of “Dao” in Tao Te Ching from the perspective of Steiner’s interpretive translation studies. *Hubei Social Sciences*, (06), 138-142.
- Yang, H. (2009). How to get the word “Dao” – A case study of the translation of “Dao” in Tao Te Ching. *Chinese Cultural Studies*, (03), 192-196.

A Study of the Translations and Translation Philosophy of Feng Zhi

Siqi Zhou, Yongqiang Liu*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: zjuzsq@163.com

[Abstract] Feng Zhi, an outstanding translator often overshadowed by his accomplishments as a scholar and poet, has made significant contributions to the introduction of German literature to China. While lacking a formal translation theory, Feng Zhi extensively addressed translation issues in prefaces, afterwords and numerous articles, encompassing translation purposes, methods, poetry translation, translator's cultivation, translation criticism and other aspects. However, scholarly exploration of Feng Zhi's role as a translator remains limited, not matching his remarkable translation achievements. Therefore, this study explores Feng Zhi's translation philosophy and practice using theories from translation studies, aesthetics and literature, thus enhancing his profile as a translator of literature.

[Keywords] Feng Zhi; translator; translation philosophy; translation practice

Introduction

Feng Zhi (1905-1993) stands as a renowned poet in modern Chinese literary history, lauded by Lu Xun as "China's most outstanding lyric poet" (Lu, 1935, p. 5). He is equally celebrated for his accomplishments as a translator, who made an indelible contribution to the introduction of German literature in China. Feng Zhi's translations encompass diverse genres, including poetry, prose, novels and correspondence, and span German literary history with notable works like "Letters to a Young Poet", "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship" and "On the Aesthetic Education of Man", which cover both literary classics and contemporary works. His translations provide not only insights into the contours of German classical literature but also offer a lens through which the developmental trajectory of early German literary translation in China can be studied. In 2021, Zhejiang University's Chinese Academy of Translation and Translation Studies included Feng Zhi's translated works in the "Representative Translated Works Collection of Chinese Translators", presenting a more comprehensive portrait of Feng Zhi as a translator. However, scholarly attention has primarily focused on Feng Zhi's identity as a poet. A comprehensive exploration of Feng Zhi's translation philosophy, style, strategy and the impact of his translated works remains lacking in the academic discourse.

Although prolific in translated works, Feng Zhi never referred to himself as a translator, and he even vehemently denied being one. In his "On Poetry Creation" he humbly stated, "I am not the type of translator who possesses adept translation skills" (Feng, 1999a, p. 253). He rarely wrote about his own experience in translation, and his thoughts on translation can be found scattered across essays from different periods and prefaces to his translated volumes. While Feng Zhi did not formulate a comprehensive systematic translation theory, he put forth numerous insightful and constructive ideas on translation. His explorations encompassed discussions on the purpose of translation, commentary on translators, analysis of translation challenges, and investigations into translation phenomena. The richness and breadth of his writings on translation continue to offer inspiration. Furthermore, Feng Zhi's translation philosophy was cultivated through extensive practical experience, rendering it pragmatically relevant to contemporary translation endeavors.

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: lyqgermanist@163.com

Perspectives on the Purposes of Translation

Feng Zhi has consistently placed a profound emphasis on translation of literary works. In his essay “On the Current State of Literary Translation” he explicitly delineates the dual objectives of translating foreign literature: “On the positive side, it enriches oneself, inspiring growth. On the negative side, it corrects oneself and, through comparison, sheds light on the position of one’s own literary endeavor. While finding similarities with others is gratifying, uncovering differences may yield even more benefits. Often, it is the unfamiliar that has the potential to broaden our horizons” (Feng, 1999a, p. 317). In Feng Zhi’s perspective, translation assumes not only the role of an “importer”, but also that of a “builder”. While infusing China’s modern literature with distinct foreign literary elements, translation also serves as a mirror for scholars, enabling them to learn from others’ strengths, address their own weaknesses, expand their understanding of Chinese literary traditions, facilitate self-reflection, engage in self-transformation and realize their potential within the realms of adaptation and critique.

During the May Fourth Period, there was a significant increase in translated works and a liberation of literary styles. While the translation landscape of this period exhibited varied quality, the pivotal translation endeavors were largely aligned with the needs of literary and social revolutions of the time. These endeavors were characterized by distinct motivations and conscious choices. Consequently, the translators intentionally disregarded prevailing trends of Expressionism and Surrealism after World War I, focusing instead on introducing 18th and 19th-century European Romanticism and Realism. This exerted a profound influence on the development of modern Chinese literature, marking a significant milestone in China’s intellectual, cultural, and literary exchange with the global community. Feng Zhi argued that the impact of translations during the May Fourth Period had two main dimensions: “Firstly, translated works encouraged readers to deeply explore human existence, dissect society, and present new literature with innovative forms suited for expressing novel ideas and themes, such as modern poetry, drama, and short stories. Secondly, it reshaped the understanding of literature itself, challenging China’s previous perception of literary heritage, no longer regarding archaic prose or derivative forms as the sole essence of literature” (Feng, 1999c, p. 219). Under the banner of “Translation Leading the Way”, the influx of new concepts, novel ideas, and innovative forms through translations during the May Fourth Period ignited an ardent zeal for creative expression among authors. This subsequently led to novel explorations and breakthroughs in content and thematic elements, nurturing the nascent generation of writers during the emergence of modern Chinese literature.

The May Fourth Movement simultaneously heralded a new era of vernacular translation and ignited a linguistic revolution, transitioning from Classical Chinese to vernacular Chinese as the primary mode of expression. Lu Xun advocated the translation principle of “faithfulness rather than conformity”, encouraging the adoption of the new language. Translation endeavors introduced novel vocabulary and syntactical constructs, constituting an experimentation with the Chinese language. Building upon Lu Xun’s principles, Feng Zhi recognized translation’s pivotal role in shaping modern Chinese. He remarked, “Over the past forty years, vocabularies and structures introduced through translation, though initially unfamiliar, have gradually become accustomed by people and integral to the language” (Feng, 1999c, p. 296). In this light, Feng Zhi and his contemporaries actively contributed to the evolution of modern Chinese through translation. Throughout this process, the language continually enriched itself, demonstrating a vigorous vitality in the face of various “foreign” challenges, solidifying its own identity and embarking on a journey towards linguistic modernization.

Poet's Translation of Poetry

Translation, at its fundamental essence, embodies a reciprocal intercommunication between the “self” and the “other”, representing an openness to different realms (Xu, 2014, p. 273). The dual identity of poet and translator synergistically enriched Feng Zhi's creative and translational pursuits. His poetry and translation activities mutually influenced and propelled one another, akin to the interplay of carriage wheels or wings of a bird, showcasing interactive complementarity. Feng Zhi's translations not only vividly captured the poetic essence of the original German texts, but also faithfully conveyed their spirit (Liu, 2021, p. 4). His extensive translation work also forged intertextual connections with German poets like Heine, Rilke and Hesse, seamlessly integrating the poetic nuances of the German language into his own verse.

During his five years in Germany, Feng Zhi was deeply influenced by existentialist philosophy, as well as poets like Hölderlin, Kleist and Georg Trakl. However, his encounter with Rilke during this period stands out as particularly significant and far-reaching. In 1931, while studying in Heidelberg, Feng Zhi wrote a letter to Yang Hui, expressing his discovery not only of his ideal poetry and prose in Rilke's Works but also of the long-sought ideal life. He ardently wished to introduce Rilke's works to China, enabling more Chinese youths to find inspiration: “The youth in China are currently blind... Ensnared in errors and confusion, and it is my duty to translate some of Rilke's works so that they can be inspired and save themselves through Rilke's guidance and path” (Feng, 1999d, p. 120). Poet Wang Jiixin once assessed: “Feng Zhi's introduction of Rilke is a spiritual event in China... Our generation's encounter with Rilke is through Mr. Feng Zhi, an encounter with ‘Feng Zhi's Rilke’. Feng Zhi's Rilke embodies the fusion of two poetic souls. From Feng Zhi's translation of Rilke, we truly grasp the essence of ‘poetic spirit’” (Wang, 2011, p. 27). Feng Zhi is best known for his translation of Rilke's *Herbsttag*, a poem that has attracted the interest of many readers and translators since its inception. This article selects the third stanza from the translations by Feng Zhi and Bei Dao for comparative analysis:

ST: Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr. / Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben, / wird wachen, lesen, lange Briefe schreiben / und wird in den Alleen hin und her / unruhig wandern, wenn die Blätter treiben.

Fengzhi's Translation: 谁这时没有房屋, 就不必建筑, / 谁这时孤独, 就永远孤独, / 就醒着, 读着, 写着长信, / 在林荫道上来回 / 不安地游荡, 当着落叶纷飞。

Beidao's Translation: 谁此时没有房子, 就不必建造, / 谁此时孤独, 就永远孤独, / 就醒来, 读书, 写长长的信, / 在林荫路上不停地 / 徘徊, 落叶纷飞。

Comparing the two translations, Bei Dao's rendition begins with “房子” (fang zi), which has a more flowing phonetic quality, while Feng Zhi's “房屋” (fang wu) conveys spaciousness. In the third line, Bei Dao emphasizes the adjective “长” (long), while Feng Zhi underscores the action “写” (writing), creating balanced parallelism with the preceding verbs and rhythm. Overall, Bei Dao's translation carries a distinctive personal style but lacks the original text's musicality. In contrast, Feng Zhi, with his insightful understanding of Rilke and poetic language, not only preserves the essence of the original but also imbues it with a unique and captivating charm. During the translation journey, Feng Zhi deepened his grasp of Rilke's insights, incorporating Rilke's contemplations into his own poetic creations. Inspired by Rilke's “Sonnets to Orpheus”, Feng Zhi released the “Sonnets” in 1941. His sonnets adopt relatively flexible forms, encapsulating philosophical reflections on poetry, life, experience and existence, transcending conventional

romantic lyricism to present an expansive and evocative imagery. Feng Zhi’s translation and study of Rilke cast a unique radiance with foreign charm on China’s native literature. Through his poetry, the German academic community and readers glimpsed the panorama of modern Chinese verse.

The realm of art knows no bounds, and the art of translation is no exception. Feng Zhi, wielding the pen of a poet, embarked on translating poetry with unparalleled mastery over rhythm, melody, emotion, and ambiance—a true exemplar. His translated poems bear an exceptional emphasis on conveying phonetics, rhythm and format, meticulously transplanting the structural and melodic essence of the original verses. Feng Zhi believed that translating poetry necessitates, first and foremost, a comprehensive understanding of the original poem. This entails not only grasping its meanings, but also immersing oneself in its ambiance and rhythm through repeated recitations. Only then can one faithfully and straightforwardly render the original intention of the poem. German sinologist Rolf Trauzettel once appraised: “In Feng Zhi’s work, the unadorned and artistically imbued translations exhibit creativity, as he transforms everything into melody and rhythm, giving rise to an unparalleled emotional resonance” (Trauzettel, 1989). Esteemed scholar Yan Baoyu also marveled at Feng Zhi’s translation of the poem “Loreley”, noting its ability to be sung with the well-known tune of Heine’s original in Germany (Yan, 1993, p. 112). This illustrates Feng Zhi’s profound comprehension and adept mastery of phonetics, evident in every instance, revealing the translator’s dedication and aptitude.

During the translation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “Wanderer’s Nightsong”, Feng Zhi astutely observed that “a literal translation renders the text insipid, while a mere paraphrase risks sacrificing the poem’s innate simplicity and distorting its essence” (Feng, 1999c, p. 126). Goethe’s succinct eight-line poem embodies a natural and refined simplicity, maintaining a fluid coherence and harmonious tonality despite its lack of rigid metrical constraints. Through a judicious selection of vowels such as “a”, “au”, “u” and “ü” the phonetic composition adeptly captures the nocturnal beauty. However, the inherent differences between Chinese and German preclude a direct transference of the original poem’s musicality, and any forced adaptation would jeopardize the intended meaning. Confronted with this challenge, Feng Zhi chose to compensate for the untranslatable tonal qualities of the original by rhyming patterns. Words ending with the vowel “i” evoked tranquility, while “ong” conveyed loftiness. Feng Zhi matched the use of “you” in the original with words rhyming in “ao”, subtly referencing the poet himself. His translation strategy, guided by the belief that “the form of a poem should be determined by the characteristics of the language” (Feng, 1999a, p.88), showcased his creativity in linguistic manipulation, harnessing the potentiality of the Chinese language. This approach, maintaining a concise and polished syntax, imbued the translated verses with a mellifluous discourse, robust sonority, dynamic rhythm, and graceful flow. These qualities showcased Feng Zhi’s precise understanding of the original poem’s cadence and his mastery of phonetics.

Table 1. *Fengzhi’s Translation of the Poem “Wanderer’s Nightsong”*

Original Text	Fengzhi’s Translation
Über allen Gipfeln Ist Ruh, In allen Wipfeln Spürest du Kaum einen Hauch; Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde. Warte nur, balde Ruhest du auch.	一切峰顶的上空 静寂 一切的树梢中 你几乎觉察不到 一些生气; 鸟儿们静默在林里 且等候, 你也快要 去休息。

Fidelity in Translation, Convergence of Form and Essence

Feng Zhi stressed the importance of preserving the original intention and form in translation, faithfully reproducing the true essence of the original. He opposed translators who embellished and arbitrarily altered the text to enhance the so-called “poetic” quality in translation. In his work “Poetry and Heritage”, he criticized Lin Shu for “arbitrary deletion and distortion” of the original work using the classical style of the Tongcheng School (Feng, 1999b, p. 346), using the guise of translation for creative composition. In contrast, Feng Zhi’s own translations can be described as faithful and precise. He conducted meticulous research and verification of names, places and significant events in the original text, ensuring accuracy and reliability. He emphasized the necessity of thoroughly reading the original work, grasping the author’s character, writing style and the essence of the work. He rejected pandering to the masses and fleeting trends. Feng Zhi believed that the excessive use of four-character Chinese idioms in translations often led to ambiguity and deviation from the original, which he disapproved of.

Fidelity to the original doesn’t mean a rigid adherence to the literal text, nor does it entail a mechanical or inflexible translation. There are instances where adjustments and adaptations are necessary to capture the original effect while maintaining idiomatic expressions in the target language. Feng Zhi recognized the relative nature of fidelity and the necessity for flexibility in literary translation. When translating Heine’s “Germany, a Winter’s Tale”, he encountered the term “Krammetsvogel”, which referred to a bird associated with a local dish in Heine’s hometown. Dissatisfied with the available translations, Feng Zhi enlisted the help of his friend Yan Baoyu to consult the biology department at Peking University and eventually selected the colloquial term “穿叶儿” (Leaf-Piercing Bird) used in the Beijing region, reflecting the bird’s local context. This translation choice is not only accurate in conveying the intended meaning, but also culturally resonant and aesthetically pleasing, in harmony with Chinese aesthetics.

Feng Zhi believed in the equal significance of both form and content, stressing that translators should uphold faithfulness not only to the original work’s content and structure, but also to its style and essence. He advocated for a fusion of form and spirit, where corresponding forms lay the groundwork for reproducing original content and conveying intrinsic essence. Feng Zhi asserted in “The Style of ‘Thus Spoke Zarathustra’”, “Merely avoiding errors in meaning cannot be considered the ultimate requirement for a translator of ‘Thus Spoke Zarathustra’; truly ideal translation entails a dedicated effort to recreate its distinctive style through a meticulous manipulation of language” (Feng, 1999c, p. 285). He noted Nietzsche’s unique “dance style”, marked by musical, dance-like, and playful qualities. While acknowledging the linguistic disparities between Chinese and German, Feng Zhi emphasized that, the translator should at least evoke a sense of “playing with words” (Wortspiel) in the reader. For example, he skillfully employed both Chinese and German language structures to translate “Der Weissager spricht, was er ‘weiss’” as “先知说, 他所‘知’”, thereby preserving Nietzsche’s block-like wordplay in the translated text. Feng Zhi’s pursuit extended beyond content conveyance, encompassing the harmonious interplay of form and content to infuse the translated text with the original work’s distinctive atmosphere and style. In essence, Feng Zhi’s translation approach exemplifies a commitment to both faithfulness and creative adaptation, striking a delicate balance between preserving the original essence and effectively resonating in the target language, which involves unique linguistic and artistic expression in Chinese that resonated culturally with readers, achieving interlingual communication.

Guidance from the “Guide” to the “Traveler”

Feng Zhi once likened himself to a “guide” in the realm of German literature, leading “travelers” into this domain. He believed that it is the sincere “travelers” who make profound discoveries (Ding, 2001, p.81). His philosophy aligns with the modern translation mission, where translators are no longer mere converters of words but also conveyors of culture and guides of thought. As a “guide”, Feng Zhi hopes that “travelers” expand their horizons and drive innovation. He earnestly encourages translators to infuse literary translation with broader significance and mission in cultural exchange.

The American comparative literature theorist Shaw has noted that translators exhibit “selective resonance” with the original work when choosing which piece to translate (Shaw, 1961, p. 117). As a profoundly erudite German scholar, Feng Zhi’s profound insights into literary works guided his selective approach to translation projects, focusing primarily on the classics of German literature and philosophy. He displayed a particular interest in poets with rich philosophical implications and distinct modern characteristics, such as Goethe, Heine, Rilke, and Brecht. Therefore, Feng Zhi’s translation process was marked by careful consideration, avoiding hurried choices and standardized methods, eschewing the trend of translating bestsellers. In his 1944 essay “On the Current State of Literary Translation”, Feng Zhi sharply critiqued prevalent translation trends of introducing numerous popular works from Europe and America, as well as early 19th-century Romantic literature. This chaotic landscape of publishers vying to hastily produce bestselling books left him disheartened. In 1980, Feng Zhi penned a letter to the President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, expressing his puzzlement and questioning the widespread popularity of foreign detective novels, and the subsequent mass translation and publication by publishers. Through these actions, Feng Zhi conveyed his deep concerns about the prevailing issues within literary translation and publishing. Feng Zhi’s stance was not rooted in disdain for popular literature or harboring prejudices against it. Instead, he believed that “literature is by no means a mere pastime” (Feng, 1999a, p. 317). Despite their commercial success, bestselling works often lack connection to real-life experiences and contribute little to the advancement of literature. Feng Zhi emphasized the responsibility of translators, urging them to channel their abilities into works of greater depth and value to inspire contemplation of life, rather than seeking an easy way out.

In the realm of publishing, Feng Zhi advocated moving away from chasing transient fads and catering solely to popular trends. He contended that the publishing industry should balance financial gain with social benefits and cultivate a heightened sense of societal responsibility and mission. Beyond its commercial role, publishing plays a vital part in disseminating cultural expression and guiding intellectual exploration. Feng Zhi stressed the urgency of strengthening theoretical foundations, reevaluating core principles, and integrating diverse intellectual perspectives. He highlighted the importance of discernment when introducing Western theories, cautioning against uncritical assimilation and urging critical evaluation of their inherent limitations. Guided by dialectical and historical materialism, he proposed a comprehensive analysis of foreign literary works and theories’ contextual emergence to impact contemporary Chinese literary and cultural discourse (Feng, 1999a, p. 129). This viewpoint harmonizes with Feng Zhi’s overarching theory of translation purpose.

Feng Zhi consistently championed reader-responsibility, advocating for an approach that emphasizes “strengthening education and promoting critique” to enhance readers’ discernment and appreciation skills. This empowers them to closely engage with literary classics and attain deeper insights (Feng, 1999a, p. 115). In his translation of Heinrich Heine’s “Germany, A Winter’s Tale”, Feng Zhi diligently facilitated comprehensive reader understanding of the work’s historical context, thematic content, and artistic

attributes. He crafted a thorough translator's preface and provided detailed explanations and annotations after each chapter. These aids aimed to elucidate core themes, interconnections, metaphors, allusions, and linguistic nuances within the poetry. Notably, Feng Zhi's annotations went beyond mere supplemental information to assist comprehension of the text, instead offering evaluative commentaries that illuminated his interpretations and perspectives, aiming to enlighten readers and kindle their enthusiasm.

The evolution of literature is shaped by societal currents, its trajectory is intertwined with the passage of time. Profound sensory experiences inspire committed expression, forging emotional connections. Feng Zhi's earnest discourse directed towards translators, the publishing industry and readers vividly underscores his profound concern and sense of responsibility towards the realms of literature, translation, and publication. This stance aligns with Feng Zhi's life philosophy of "earnest living, responsibility, compassion, and pioneering spirit".

Conclusion

Feng Zhi dedicated his entire life to the study, teaching and promotion of foreign literature, introducing the essence of Western literature and contributing to the advancement of contemporary Chinese literature. His engagement in translation permeated his creative and scholarly pursuits, as well as intertwining with his personal experiences and exemplifying his charismatic persona. Feng Zhi's contributions to literary translation manifest in two principal domains: translation theory and practical translation endeavors. In the realm of practical translation, Feng Zhi's extensive translated works span various genres, showcasing exceptional translation skills, and have left behind a valuable legacy in China's translation and literary circles. His poetry translations exert an especially significant influence on contemporary Chinese poetry. Concerning translation theories, while Feng Zhi didn't formulate an explicit, structured theoretical framework, his insights are widely dispersed throughout his essays, prefaces and introductions, encompassing a broad spectrum of topics such as translation purpose, methodologies, translator's cultivation and translation criticism. Many of his views and propositions are profound and incisive. These reflections stem from his vast translation experience, offering valuable guidance and reference for contemporary translation practitioners and researchers. This study merely scratches the surface of the exploration of the translator Feng Zhi. His position in translation history and the assessment of his translated work's value awaits deeper analysis, leaving ample room for further research into his profound impact on translation.

Acknowledgement

The research is supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities in China.

References

- Ding, Z. (2001). Is Feng Zhi a translator? *Historical Materials of New Literature*, (04), 76-82.
- Feng, Z. (1999a). *The complete works of Feng Zhi: Volume 5*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Education Publishing House.
- Feng, Z. (1999b). *The complete works of Feng Zhi: Volume 6*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Education Publishing House.
- Feng, Z. (1999c). *The complete works of Feng Zhi: Volume 8*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Education Publishing House.

- Feng, Z. (1999d). *The complete works of Feng Zhi: Volume 12*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Education Publishing House.
- Lu, X. (1935). *Complete series of Chinese new literature*, (p. 5). Shanghai: Liangyou Printing Company.
- Liu, Y. Q. (2021). *Representative translated works collection of Chinese translators: Feng Zhi volume*, (pp. 1-16). Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press.
- Shaw J. T. (1961). Literary indebtedness and comparative literary studies. In N. P. Stallknecht, & H. Frenz, (Ed.), *Comparative Literature. Method and Perspective*, (pp. 67, 115-117). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Trauzettel, R. (1989). Dichtender Gelehrter, gelehrter Dichter und Übersetzer. *Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung: Jahrbuch 1988*, (pp. 23-27). Frankfurt: Luchterhand.
- Wang, J. X. (2011). Translation and language issue of new poetry. *Literary Research*, (10), 27.
- Xu, J. (2019). The spirit of translation and the May Fourth movement: The significance of translation to the May Fourth movement. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 40(03), 5-12.
- Yan, B. Y. (1993). Humble attitude and rigorous and truth-seeking academic spirit: Memories of comrade Feng Zhi. *Peking University Journal (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, (05), 107-112.

The Construction of the National Image of China in *El Mundo*: Transitivity Analysis of the China-related Reports in the Last Five Years

Sunhua Gao, Xiao Yang*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: gaosh@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] The construction of a good national image is of great importance to enhance national discourse and strengthen comprehensive national power and international competitiveness. This article uses Halliday's transitivity of systemic-functional grammar as the theoretical framework to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze and interpret the coverage of China in *El Mundo* in the past five years. Through the analysis of the transitivity of selected articles and statistics, the research finds that *El Mundo* has the highest proportion of material processes in its China-related coverage, reflecting that this newspaper is basically objective in constructing the Chinese national image. At the same time, however, its coverage of China using the relational process clause is generally negative in its emotional tone, concealing a bias against China. In combination with the study's findings, the article also makes certain recommendations to provide some references for China's foreign promotion and national image building.

[Keywords] *El Mundo*; transitivity; systemic-functional grammar; national image

Introduction

How to make China's voice heard effectively and how to build China's national image have always been important issues of concern to academia and society. In his report to the 20th National Party Congress, Xi Jinping placed great emphasis on the importance of strengthening international communication capacity. A national image is composed of the subjective attitudes of foreign audiences towards a state (Buhmann, & Ingenhoff, 2015)¹. As China's international status grows, attention must also be paid to the problem of the mismatch between China's strength and its image and the problem of the inability of effective communication between China's discursive system and the global one. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze and summarize the national image in the past five years for the construction of international communication capacity. Fifty years have passed since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Spain. Telling the Chinese story and spreading the Chinese voice in Spain is an inevitable requirement to promote the more profound development of relations between the two countries.

This article examines the national image of China in the Spanish media publication *El Mundo*, which is the second most widely circulated daily newspaper in Spain and whose website was once the most visited electronic newspaper in the country, by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, starting from discourse analysis and using the method of systemic-functional grammar, with textual analysis to interpret some key phrases.

*Corresponding author. Email address: yangboran@zju.edu.cn

¹Academic circles have not reached a consensus on the basic concept of national image. Domestic and foreign scholars have elaborated different definitions around whether the national image is self-constructed or externally constructed and the difference between national image and national facts. For practical reasons, the definition adopted in this article contains two basic premises: (1) the national image is a subjective impression based on objective facts; (2) it is constructed by others.

Literature Review

We searched for articles with “National Image” in their title in CNKI’s CSSCI database for 2017 to 2022 and obtained 350 valid papers. Over the past five years, research on national image has been gaining popularity in the educational circles. Generally, the themes of these articles focus on two main topics: the study of the outsider’s perspective of national image (Wan, 2020; Li, Y., 2020) and the study of national image communication strategy (Dong et al., 2018; Zhao, Y., 2018).

Domestically, research on China’s national image from the perspective of others has focused on the interpretation of foreign media. Since the 21st century, Chinese scholars have begun to use tools such as frame theory and symbolic theory to focus on China’s image in the Western media by analyzing the reports on China in media such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, CNN, and BBC, focusing on the coverage of events of great social and historical impact (Zhu, 2004; Jia et al., 2013; Li, X., 2020). In Spain, some scholars have attempted to capture the image of China in the Spanish press by analyzing the coverage of China in one or more newspapers at a given time (Sergio et al., 2017; Wang, X. et al., 2014). Many have found that there is a bias against China in the Spanish mainstream media and that the image is incomplete in the coverage.

National image communication strategy has been the focus of national image research in recent years, which is inextricably linked to the Party Central Committee’s continued efforts to strengthen international communication capacity. In terms of focus, existing studies have looked at the issue mainly from two perspectives. One issue is about the media. With the development of the Internet, scholars have explored strategies under audiovisual means such as movies and short videos (Yang et al., 2022). The other issue is summing up experiences of events. The reports of major events such as Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge, the Olympic Games and Winter Olympics have shown the world a positive and responsible image of China (Hu, 2020; Wu et al., 2021).

Despite the vigorous development of related research in recent years, those existing still tend to be homogeneous in two aspects. In terms of research methods, researchers mainly focus on qualitative methods, and only some combine content analysis for quantitative analysis, which is prone to the limitation of strong subjectivity in conclusions. As for research subjects, it focuses more on English-speaking countries or neighboring countries. Due to Spain’s historical status and essential position in China’s national strategy, it should receive more attention.

The Transitivity of Systemic-functional Grammar

Halliday is the founder of systemic-functional grammar, whose book *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* proposed that language has three major metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual, which work together in a clause. The ideational function is what language uses to express content; what is of concern is how clauses reproduce the world. Transitivity is the main content of this function, which mainly includes processes, the participants in the process and circumstances associated with the process. In this framework, the process of a clause to present meaning is most focused on. Halliday has divided transitivity into six processes: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

It has been shown that the first three of the six processes are the most important (He et al., 2016). The material process represents the process of “doing”, which represents the objective existence or behavior of the external world. The mental process represents the process of “knowing”, which is the description of the perception of the internal world. The relational process represents the process of “being”, which is between

the two types of the world and describes the relationship between things. These three processes play a primary role in transitivity.

Research Design

We used Factiva, the world’s largest repository of news and information, owned by Dow Jones & Company, as our data source. In order to build a complete, accurate, and concise corpus, three sifts were carried out.

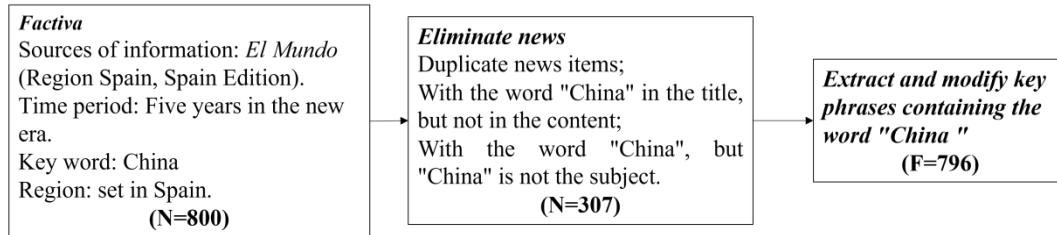


Figure 1. Retrieval Process

In this article, we use UAMCT to annotate sentences. UAM has been developed by computational linguist Mick O’Donnell and comprises a set of tools for linguistic annotation that can be performed manually or semi-automatically.

We have used the three components as a framework to build the annotation system into the application and perform the annotation manually. With all clauses annotated, we used the “statistics” function to analyze the percentage and distribution of the six processes.

Results and Discussion

General Data of the Research

Table 1. Number of the Three Components

Components	2017 (Partial)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 (Partial)
Process	17	44	142	616	225	143
Participant	36	81	241	1086	376	241
Circumstance	14	42	75	330	107	51

Table 2. Number and Proportion of the Six Processes

Process	2017 (Partial)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 (Partial)	Total
Material	6 35.3%	24 54.5%	95 66.9%	429 69.6%	155 68.9%	97 67.8%	806 67.9%
Mental	0 -	4 9.1%	9 6.3%	29 4.7%	12 5.3%	5 3.5%	59 4.97%
Relational	11 64.7%	13 29.5%	35 24.6%	82 13.3%	39 17.3%	23 16.1%	203 17.10%
Behavioral	0 -	0 -	0 -	0 -	1 2.4%	0 -	1 0.08%
Verbal	0 -	2 4.5%	2 1.4%	67 10.9%	13 5.8%	12 8.4%	96 8.09%
Existential	0 -	1 2.3%	1 0.7%	9 1.5%	5 2.2%	6 4.2%	22 1.85%
Total	17 100%	44 100%	142 100%	616 100%	225 100%	143 100%	1187 100%

According to the table, *El Mundo* has adopted five processes in its coverage in the last five years. Behavioral processes interpret physiological and psychological behavior (especially for humans) and are mainly used in everyday life situations, therefore in our research, they are largely absent from formal reporting.

Generally, material processes occupy the largest proportion, reaching 70% and basically exceeding 50% in each year, followed by relational processes, with a share of over 18%. Mental, verbal, and existential processes do not vary much in distribution, remaining basically below 10%.

The material process describes what is done and what has happened, emphasizing an objective description of reality. Journalistic media is about telling readers what is happening in the outside world, so it inevitably uses a series of actions to convey events. For this reason, material processes make up the bulk of reporting. The main role of relational processes is attribution and identification, mainly used to present background information about an event and evaluate and judge specific events.

Discussion of the Distribution of Ephemeral Perspective Processes

Although the distribution of the six processes has generally remained stable over the last five years, we have also noticed that the distribution of the different types has shown some variation. To observe this trend more directly, we formed the following line graph. Since the behavioral process only appears once in the last five years of the corpus, we do not present them here.

From the 19th CCP Congress in 2017 to the 20th Congress in 2022, the proportion of material processes in coverage of China shows an overall upward trend, reflecting an increased focus on factual descriptions in coverage of China. Relational processes, however, show a fluctuation, surpassing even the use of material processes in the 2017 corpus. As we can see in the graph, the evolution of relational processes roughly follows a trend of V. First, during the period of the Covid-19 outbreaks, i.e., 2020, the coverage of China was mainly concentrated in the special column on the epidemic, dedicated to reporting on the facts in China. Therefore, in this period, the material process was used more and the relational process less. This process was relatively high in 2017-2019, before the epidemic, and in 2021-2022, when the coronavirus entered a stable phase. The relational process is the most direct process of building a country’s image. In this phase, the participants in the relational process (the bearer and identified) mainly were “China” or phrases with “China”, and thus the national image of China was constructed, hence the abundance of usage.

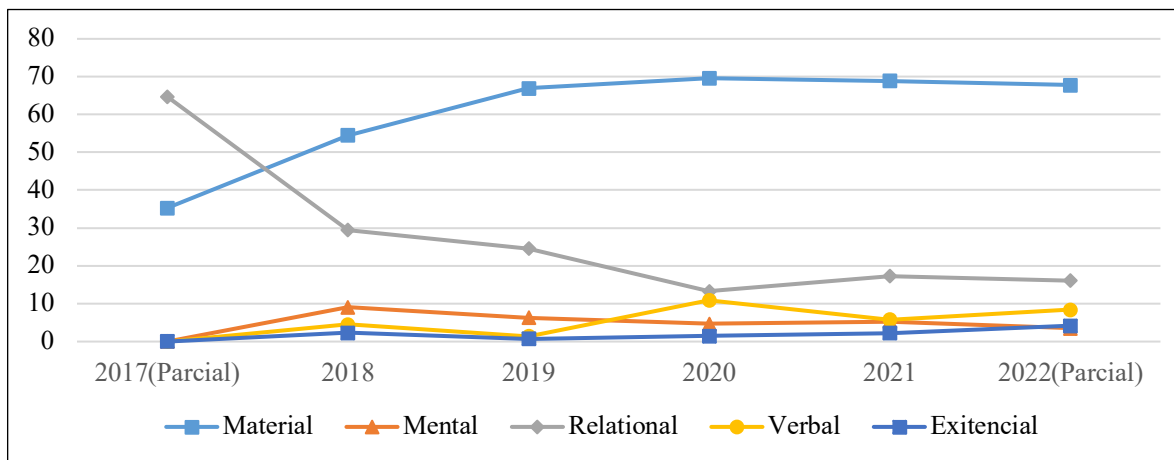


Figure 2. Distribution of Processes

Discussion about the Material Process

As the largest developing country, China's economic development has received much attention in the West. It is shown that *El Mundo* has used material processes to describe the size of the Chinese economy. Examples (1)-(3) show the national image of China as a major economic power with data such as trade volumes. Generally, this section is objective and positive. In recent years, the newspaper has focused more on China's technological innovation (Ren et al., 2022). In particular, the ongoing trade war between the United States and China has led to a particular focus on the development of 5G communications technology. The content is also mainly factual and reflects China's progress in technological innovation, as in Examples (4)-(5).

(1) *China (Actor) entró por primera vez en 2016 (Circumstance) en el ranking de las economías más punteras. (2017)*

(2) *China crece a una media de un 9% anual, lo que ha permitido reducir considerablemente la pobreza: de 40 millones de pobres a 10 millones (2018).*

(3) *España (Actor) compra (Material Process) en China (Source) su 5G (Goal) pese a la alerta estadounidense (Concession) (2019).*

(4) *China exporta tecnología e infraestructuras y está haciendo grandes inversiones en Iberoamérica y África. (2020)*

(5) *Bloquear a Huawei hubiera impulsado a China a desarrollar la tecnología que le permitiría prescindir de EEUU. (2020)*

Since achieving general prosperity, China has committed itself to poverty reduction. However, in its coverage, *El Mundo* has been more biased towards poverty and has ignored China's outstanding achievements in the cause of poverty reduction. The relevant clauses highlight sections such as poverty in Chinese society (6).

(6) *En China (Circumstance) también se pasa (Process) hambre (Actor) (2019).*

Regarding the distribution of clauses in the corpus, the construction of China's national image by *El Mundo* peaked during the coronavirus. In terms of content, the outbreak of the pandemic modified the process of China's national image construction to some extent, producing a new evolutionary path.

In the early stages of the outbreak, unlike other Western media that stigmatized China, *El Mundo* used more material processes, as in Examples (8)-(9). However, the newspaper still added "from China" to "coronavirus" in the definition of the virus, which had a certain passive tendency. During the epidemic, newspaper coverage became standardized with objective reporting of relevant data.

(7) *China registra 10 casos importados y suma 20 días sin contagios a nivel local (2020).*

(8) *España estudia dos posibles casos de coronavirus de China en dos personas (2020).*

During the epidemic, China actively participated in the international fight against COVID-19, providing medical supplies and technical assistance to other countries. Spain was one of the countries that received assistance from China. Although Spain has reported on this event, in the specific reports, "China" is mainly used not as an actor but as a source, which to some extent weakens the recognition of Chinese assistance. Readers cannot perceive that the supplies came from Chinese aid and not from Spanish government purchases.

(9) *Más de un millón de mascarillas (Actor) llegarán (Material Process) el lunes de China (Source) al almacén de Inditex para hacer frente a la crisis (2020).*

(10) *El segundo avión de China (Source) fletado por Ayuso aterriza (Material Process) en Madrid con 82 toneladas de material sanitario.*

After the Covid-19 situation was contained and stabilized in China in the late 2020s, related reports used more relational processes to recognize China's achievements and material processes to analyze the reasons for China's achievements. However, unfortunately, they are inevitably influenced by ideology in their analysis. As in Example (11), although "are overcoming" as a material process expresses a positive attitude, the author attributed an "authoritarian" character to the actor and contrasted it with "Western democracies" in the subordinate clause, which misinterpreted China's political image. Misconceptions and stereotypes about the Chinese political system have long been present in Western media coverage, and *El Mundo* is no exception. We can see that this misinterpretation is even more evident in the relational process clause.

(11) *China y otros países autoritarios (como Singapur) (Actor) están venciendo (Material Process) la epidemia mientras que a nosotros en las democracias occidentales nos queda mucho por hacer (2020).*

In 2022, China implemented the dynamic zero COVID-19 strategy based on national conditions and insistence that people's lives come first. Western governments adopted a laissez-faire policy and gradually relaxed their epidemic control policies. In this context, although there was some positive content on China's vaccination rates (12), most reports used this policy to construct an image of "lack of freedom" and "lack of adaptability".

(12) *China tiene al 85% de la población con la pauta completa de la vacuna (2022).*

(13) *Regreso a la prisión china del 'Covid cero' dos años y ocho meses después del comienzo de la pandemia (2022).*

Discussion about the Relational Process

The identification and attribution function of the relational process allows it to play a more crucial role in the construction of the image. It is found that, by guaranteeing the objectivity of its reportage, *El Mundo* made extensive use of relational processes in the construction of the image in its news.

In recent years, China's political system has been misinterpreted by the Western media, influenced by ideological clashes. From the corpus, it emerges that from 2017 to 2022, the political image of China is constructed as "absolute" "authoritarian" "illiberal", etc., which is in line with the long-standing Western stereotype of China.

(14) *China es un país de extremos absolutos (2017).*

(15) *China no es el paraíso de la libertad (2018).*

(16) *China y España son dos Estados totalitarios que aprisionan demócratas que luchan por sus derechos (2019).*

(17) *China es la mayor dictadura del planeta (2020).*

(18) *China es percibido como un estado autoritario, clientelista, revisionista y hegemónico (2021).*

(19) *China es la potencia autoritaria de orden mundial cuyas proyecciones políticas, económicas y militares de los últimos y penúltimos tiempos dibujan un panorama de voluntad expansiva que el mundo conocido por sus instituciones democráticas no puede dejar de contemplar con preocupación (2022).*

At the same time, we also note that the fear that China's development has created in the West has not yet disappeared. In both Examples (22) and (23), the bearer of the relational process is China and the attribute is "threat", and both attribute China as a threat.

(20) *China (Identified) puede ser (Process) una amenaza mayor (Identifier) para Estados Unidos que la URSS (2019).*

(21) *China (Identified) representa (Process) una peligrosa amenaza (Identifier) (2022).*

Most of the description of *El Mundo* of the Chinese economy focused on the period before the outbreak of Covid-19, and the corresponding relational process clause presents China as a "manufacturing power". However, in the context, this image defines "manufacturing" rather low down the value chain, a "manufacturing" that is inferior to "creation".

(22) *Pero este made in China es, desde hace tiempo, tan recurrido como poco valorado (2017).*

(23) *China es uno de los principales países competidores del azulejo español, no en calidad e innovación, pero sí en precio más bajo (2022).*

In the later stages of prevention and control, coverage of China had a more positive dimension regarding the use of the relational process, with a general view that Chinese policies have been successful and that there are ample prospects for development in the post-epidemic era.

(24) *China es el primer país que ha relanzado su actividad (2020).*

(25) *China es la potencia poscovid que crece (2020).*

However, in line with the pattern embodied in the material process clause, the relational process clause in 2022 also portrays China's anti-epidemic image in a negative light. Example (26) uses the metaphorical "prison" as an identifier, negating the Chinese policy. Example (27) uses the Chinese vaccine as a carrier and "much less effective" as an attribute.

(26) *Covid cero (Identified) es (Process) la cárcel (Identifier) de la que China no puede salir (2022).*

(27) *La vacuna china (Carrier) parece ser (Process) mucho menos eficaz (Attribute) que las vacunas occidentales desarrolladas por RNA mensajero (2022).*

After the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war, China's strategic partnership with Russia and its neutrality was also maligned by *El Mundo*, and China's image at this stage was mainly portrayed as "opportunistic".

(28) *China es la gran ganadora de la guerra en Ucrania (2022).*

Possible Reasons for Bias in China's Image

Lippmann introduced the concept of "pseudo-environment" in 1922, which explained the three environments in which humans live. The second is the reality that human beings select, choose, and process through the media and reproduce to their audiences. Many factors influence the selection, processing, and presentation of information. From a macro perspective, differences in journalism, ideological differences, and cultural differences influence the media, and even subjective factors such as the personal feelings of media "gatekeepers" can do so.

First are ideological differences, objectivity and truthfulness being the basic requirements of news reporting, but journalists living in a given social context are inevitably influenced by ideology. Although *El Mundo* advocates independence and freedom, it inevitably adopts a stereotypical view of China under

the influence of the “universal values” in Western ideology (Zhao Litao, 2023). Its repeated use of words such as “authoritarian” and “prison” to identify China on political issues directly reflects the ideological divide.

Second, different cultural backgrounds produce different values. Lack of knowledge of China’s status and language barriers can lead to biased news dissemination activities. Historically, Spain did not know China well and even had misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Although there was trade during the Silk Road, Spain has not had the same frequent cultural exchanges with China as countries such as the UK and the US in recent times (Zhang, 2018). During COVID-19, in particular, the collectivist ideology of Chinese culture was reflected in the unity and struggle of the masses. Spanish values of so-called “freedom” did not understand the Chinese policy against Covid, so using Western values to view Chinese policies will lead to bias.

Thirdly, national interests are paramount and are put first in international affairs. In essence, there are two natural connotations to the media’s portrayal of national image-building: the construction of their state and the construction of another’s state. Due to geopolitical considerations, faced with China’s economic growth and global power, *El Mundo* would see it as a threat (Xing et al., 2022). All this results from a clash of national interests in the international community.

Conclusion

El Mundo mainly uses the material process clause in its China-related reporting, with more than 70%, which is a requirement of objectivity in journalism. It reflects that *El Mundo* has been largely objective in its coverage of China in the past five years. However, we can still see that, in the material process clause, it continued to differentiate China’s performance in the international community by placing “China” in a different position, which was determined by ideology and national interests, and the implicit bias still exists. Beyond material processes, it used more relational processes to shape China’s national image, especially in the political and economic spheres. Of course, we also found that it used relational process clauses to construct a neutral and negative image of China scattered throughout the coverage of events, which may unconsciously create a negative impression of China among its readers.

Secondly, as for a specific image, we find that the political image of China has been constructed negatively over the past five years, invariably described as “authoritarian”, “absolute”, and as having a “lack of democracy” and “lack of freedom”. Although during the COVID-19 pandemic *El Mundo* acknowledged that China’s political system had played an important role in the successful fight against the epidemic, the negative terminology was still used qualitatively, and the bias was difficult to dispel. Economically, China was presented as an “economic power” and a “manufacturing power”, but also as “poor” and “with a wide gap between rich and poor”. These terms reflect, to some extent, the ambivalence of *El Mundo* in its specific reporting. The changing image is a struggle, which also reflects the fact that China’s comprehensive national power is gradually being recognized by the West, which as a whole, is steadily improving.

Finally, the outbreak of the epidemic was a major public health event that received widespread attention worldwide. To some extent, the epidemic broke the evolution of national image building. During the epidemic, China went from being stigmatized as a “responsible anti-epidemic power”, to “power in the post-epidemic era” and finally to “clinging to the old formulas”. The political system has become a part of the Western media narrative. In the past five years, Chinese society has developed rapidly and progressed, relations between China and Spain have been steady and positive, and China’s image in the Spanish press

has remained stable. In the future, as China's epidemic prevention and control policies are optimized, and its economy continues to recover, we believe that China's national image in the Western media may improve.

From our research, we have found that prejudices against China go back a long way. In order to better project China's image abroad, we need to adopt a more rational strategy. Ideological confrontation objectively exists, and seeking common ground while reserving differences is a more desirable option. In the process of discourse building, we should take the initiative to find common values between China and the West. The "Belt and Road" and the "Community of Human Destiny" are successful attempts. Through the construction of a common discourse, the conflict between the two sides in constructing their political images can be better resolved.

Using international discourse is an important way to shape the national image. In a pseudo-information composite environment, sovereign states need to improve their national image by maintaining international discourse. Although China's position on the international stage has greatly improved compared to the past, its national image still suffers from misunderstandings. On the one hand, in the international narrative, China needs to balance emotion and rationality in its discourse, avoiding emotional conflicts and instead making better use of objective data or proposing more practical solutions to take the lead. On the other hand, China also needs to actively promote cultural and academic exchanges, understand the dialectical relationship between the masses and authority figures, and make better use of existing discursive resources.

Creating a media matrix is also an important way for China's voice to be better heard. In the new media era, the transmission of visual information will play an increasingly important role. China has presented Chinese political parties and society through the documentaries CPC and PRC. In the future, a more visual construction of the Chinese image is needed to show the world a true, multi-dimensional, and panoramic national image of China.

References

- Buhmann, A., & Ingenhoff, D. (2015). The 4D model of the country image: An integrative approach from the perspective of communication management. *International Communication Gazette*, 77(1), 102-124.
- Dong, Y., & Tian, C. (2018). Short video dissemination and national image construction in the era of social media. *Contemporary Communication*, (03), 28-30.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiesson, C. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- He, W., & Wei, R. (2016). An overview of systemic functional linguistics and the theory of transitivity. *Journal of Beijing University of Science and Technology (Social Sciences Edition)*, 32(1), 1-20.
- Hu, J. (2020). Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games and the multi-dimensional construction of national image under the COVID-19 epidemic. *Shandong Sports Science & Technology*, 42(6), 8-13
- Li, Y. (2020). Analysis of Chinese epidemic prevention and control issues in Spanish mainstream media. *Journal of Shangqiu Normal University*, 36(11), 40-46.
- Li, X. (2022). Comparative analysis of COVID-19 news reports in China Daily and The New York Times from a transitivity perspective [Dissertation]. Jiangsu: Jiangsu University of Science and Technology.

- Jia, Z., & Zhu, W. (2013). Analysis of China's national image in the three major newspapers of Spain— Taking reports related to China during the “18th Party Congress” as an example. *Modern Communication: Journal of Communication University of China*, 2013(4), 47-49.
- Ning, Z., & He, X. (2020). Transitivity analysis of the headlines of China-related reports in the Spanish mainstream media El País during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Zhejiang International Studies University*, 2020(6), 21-29.
- Ren, W., & Qin, P. (2022). Research on the image of China science and technology. *Culture & Communication*, (04), 74-78.
- Shi, H. (2017). An insight into the view of Xinjiang in Spanish media from the perspective of *El Mundo*. *Journal of Yanbian University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 50(4), 62-68.
- Sánchez, S. (2017). Image of China and its representation in the Spanish press in the 1960s and 1970s: The case of ABC. *Communication Papers: Media Literacy and Gender Studies*, 2017(11), 89-108.
- Wu, J., & Xu, J. (2021). Intertextual strategies and the construction of China's national image: A case study on the news reports of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge. *Foreign Language in China*, (06), 45-50.
- Wang, L. (2021). From SARS to COVID-19: The difference in China's image in Spanish newspapers in 2003 and 2020. Content analysis applied to El País, El Mundo, ABC, El Periódico, and La Vanguardia. *History and Social Communication*, 26(1), 19-29.
- Wang, X., & Recoder, M. (2014). Analysis of the Chinese image in the Spanish press through news before, during, and after the 2008 Beijing Olympics [Dissertation].
- Xing, L., & Yan, C. (2022). Research on the shaping model of China's national image. *Northeast Asia Forum*, (06), 3-17+125.
- Yang, Y., & Zhang, W. (2022). Research on national image construction and communication strategies in the short video environment. *Media*, (20), 63-65.
- Zhang, Y. (2018). Review of China's national image in the mainstream newspapers of Spain. *Young Journalist*, 2018(18), 93-94.
- Zhao, Y. (2018). Research on the construction of China's national image under People's Daily ·Overseas Edition from the perspective of framework theory – A case study of reports on “the Belt and Road” from 2013-2017. *Social Sciences in Yunnan*, (05), 160-165+188.
- Zhao, L. (2023). The “discourse deficit” challenge of China's ideological discourse power and the construction of independent discourse power. *Studies in Ideological Education*, (08), 56-62.
- Zhu, Y. (2004). How the New York Times reports on China – A case study of New York Times' report on the successful launch of the Shenzhou V. *Contemporary Communication*, (04), 58-61.

Celebrity Environmentalism on Social Media in China: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Xinrong Jiang, Chenchen Zhu*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: jiangxinrong163@163.com

[Abstract] Environmental communication as a traditional discipline was established in the 1980s to bridge the gap between scientists and the public who have little knowledge of the severity of man-made environmental hazards and the necessity of mitigation. The introduction of celebrity speakers and mass communication via social media platforms around 2010 has shaped environmental communication in unprecedented ways. In recent years, China's contribution in environmental mitigation has brought political and cultural complications. This study conducts a critical discourse analysis on celebrities' environmental discourses on Sina Weibo to explore the textual features, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice of such discourses. In terms of textual features, the distribution of processes in the transitivity system indicates celebrity speakers' effort to realize the functions of green messages; that is, information and advocacy. The use of different modal operators reflects celebrity speakers' judgements on their relationships with the audience in informing, persuading and appealing to the audience. In terms of discourse practice, the production phase of sample discourses implies that the discourse producers value the authenticity and authority of provided information; and the communication phase of sample discourses implies the advantages and backdrops of celebrity environmentalism on Sina Weibo; that is, exposure and distraction. In terms of socio-cultural practice, the study testifies the reciprocity between language and society, and finds that celebrities' environmental discourses on Sina Weibo are determined by and meanwhile impact on the environmental, political and cultural spheres of the society. This study contributes theoretically and empirically to previous literature on environmental communication. It not only examines the framework of critical discourse analysis in such dynamic contexts as celebrity culture and social media setting, but also supplements first-hand data of Chinese environmental discourses into the international discussion.

[Keywords] critical discourse analysis; environmentalism; celebrity; social media; Sina Weibo

Introduction

It is alarming that humanity is exploiting and damaging our mother nature at an appalling rate without even realizing or making up for it, which finds its root in the estrangement between scientists and the general public (Priest et al., 2016). Environmental communication has thus developed as a discipline to study the role of media in bridging the gap between the scientific profession and the public sphere, to broadly address environmental issues.

Although environmentalism matters in the modern-day context, environmental values cannot get popularized without human interventions (Cox, 2018). NGOs have been looking for cooperative partners to mediate scientists and the public, among whom celebrities have become a popular choice. From movie star Leonardo DiCaprio, who produced the documentary "The 11th Hour", to Greta Thunberg the 18-year-old climate activist, who protested outside the Swedish parliament in 2018, celebrities speak up for the vulnerable nature and appeal for collective action.

Environmental communication in China started around the year 2012 (Li & Cao, 2023). Furthermore, the rise of social media has reshaped celebrity culture, and revolutionized mass communication as a whole.

¹* Corresponding author; Email address: bicyzhu@yahoo.com

Sina Weibo is a major social media platform that “stands at the top of the pyramid” of the Chinese internet market (Li, 2018), with more than 0.5 billion active accounts per month (Weibo Data Center, 2021), which has built an ideal setting for celebrity environmentalism to take root in China. Until 2022, over 1000 influential figures had joined the “Starlight League for Public Welfare” on Weibo, and the total pageview of green posts had topped 24 billion in a single year (Cao, 2022).

In order to explore the interaction between celebrities’ environmental discourses on Sina Weibo and the socio-cultural realities, this article specifies three research questions based on Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework of CDA:

- a. On the textual level, what discursive strategies are evident in celebrities’ green messages on Sina Weibo?
- b. In terms of discourse practice, how are green messages produced and communicated on Sina Weibo?
- c. In terms of socio-cultural practice, how are power and ideology reflected in such discourses, and how do these discourses in turn construct social reality?

Literature Review

Celebrity Environmentalism

Literature on celebrity, and on environmentalism, have been growing respectively over the past decades, and it was not until the 2010s that the two branches of research met at the intersection of celebrity environmentalism. Celebrity was either defined in terms of internal characters and traits or defined in relation to the general public under their influence. Ferris (2007) characterized celebrity as individuals with innate skills, qualities or charisma, whereas Boorstin (1992) famously illustrated celebrity as someone who is “known for his well-known-ness”. Environmentalism was referred to as the movement and ideology that stems from a concern for the health of natural environment that spreads knowledge about the vulnerable nature and advocates preservation and restoration of it (Abidin et al., 2020).

Previous articles shed light on the effectiveness and strategies of celebrity environmentalism. Duthie et al. (2017) and Olmedo et al. (2020) argued that celebrities’ involvement enhanced the exposure of environmental issues. In the course of environmental communication, not only should the source of news information (Anderson, 2011) but also the identity (Abidin et al., 2020) and authority (Wright & Nyberg, 2022) of the celebrities be kept credibly authentic.

Celebrity Effect in Social-Media Environmentalism

Observations on celebrity effect in social-media environmentalism differ from or supplement those on legacy media by previous literature in two ways. First, the rise of social media enlarged the scope of grassroots participation in environmental campaigns and other forms of activism. On the one hand, social media lowered the threshold for ordinary people to dominate environmental campaigns as ordinary celebrities (Abidin et al., 2020) or green influencers (Park, 2020). On the other hand, the voices of grassroots audiences were increasingly reflected by comments, likes, views and shares (Abidin et al., 2020). As a result of wider grassroots participation, collective actions were encouraged, while individual actions were too often discouraged (Park, 2022).

Second, the strategies of environmental communications had adapted to social media platforms. Subtle linguistic and emotional cues were found in celebrities’ green messages on social media, such as the use of first-person singular pronouns and emotion-loaded tokens (Park, 2020). Wright and Nyberg (2022) pointed

out that the celebrities had changed “reality” (socio-cultural constructions) through “existential tests” (strategic narratives).

CDA Studies on Environmentalism

CDA studies of environmentalism examined the relationships between environmental discourses and society. On the discursive level, Leipold et al. (2019) argued that symbols and collocations were selected to create a sense of “global connectivity” to encourage participation. Nasir et al. (2022) pointed to environmental policies as wrapped up in multimodal discourses on print media.

Previous literature on the socio-cultural level of environmentalism were limited. Most contributors (Leipold et al., 2019; Johansson & Henriksson, 2020) explained green discourses in relation to environmental policies of a chosen region and found mutual shaping forces in between. Chinese materials have rarely been analyzed under this key topic. When searching “名人公益 (celebrity for public cause/public benefit)” and “名人环保 (celebrity environmentalism)” on CNKI, this study found only 7 scholarly articles relevant altogether, none of which was conducted using a linguistic approach. When searching “celebrity environmentalism” on Web of Science, this study found only two scholarly articles relevant based on Chinese materials. This study aims to provide first-hand data collected from a popular Chinese social media platform Sina Weibo and contribute insightful observations in terms of social constructions to CDA studies of environmentalism on the whole.

Theoretical Framework

In order to examine the role of discourse in the functioning of the society, Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of CDA and Halliday’s systemic functional grammar (SFG) are employed in this thesis. Both theoretical frameworks are interested in the correlation between linguistics and social studies, but each with different leanings. SFG is a perspective on the structure of language, therefore often employed as an analytical tool to assist CDA studies. In comparison, CDA is concerned more with contexts and implications of language, often applied to media studies. Fairclough’s three-dimensional CDA and Halliday’s three meta-functions of language in SFG are detailed below.

Fairclough’s Three-dimensional Model of CDA

Fairclough (1995a) proposed three analytical stages of a single communicative event, respectively, description of “the formal properties of text”, interpretation of “the relationship between text and interaction” and explanation of “the relationship between interaction and social context”. Fairclough’s 3-dimensional model is suitable for this study, because it provides a concise framework for analyzing “conversationalized” and “marketized” mass media discourse (Fairclough, 1995b).

Systemic Functional Grammar

According to Halliday (2014), language possesses three interwoven meta-functions. Ideational function involves grammatical resources that construe human experience, measured by transitivity. Interpersonal function involves interpersonal relationships enacted by discursive actions to express motivation and attitude toward others, realized through mood and modality. Textual function deals with the structure of text and its pattern of reference, pertaining to the cohesion of text, realized through its thematic structure.

Research Method

Data Collection

To fulfill the description stage of CDA under Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, this study collected celebrities’ environmental posts from Sina Weibo. In order to identify the most representative public figures on Weibo environmentalism, this study referred to the honor roll of the “Starlight League for Public Welfare”². The league was founded on the Night of Weibo in 2016 with a view to promoting public welfare through celebrity communication. It remains as the largest official organization on Sina Weibo for this purpose, with 4000-odd celebrity members dedicated to public welfare (Cao, 2022) and over 117 billion pageviews of its 69,800-odd messages (Sina Weibo, 2022). Following the honor roll, this study identified over 1000 representative figures active in Weibo environmentalism, including actors like Zhou Xun, hosts like Reng Luyu, and athletes like Deng Yaping. A total of 405 environmental messages posted within the time range from Sept. 2019 to Dec. 2022 were collected.

Framework of Data Analysis

In the description stage of Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, Halliday’s SFG is employed to frame the linguistic features and functions of text in its internal meaning-making process and its external communication-making process. In case of confusion, the framework of data analysis is given below.

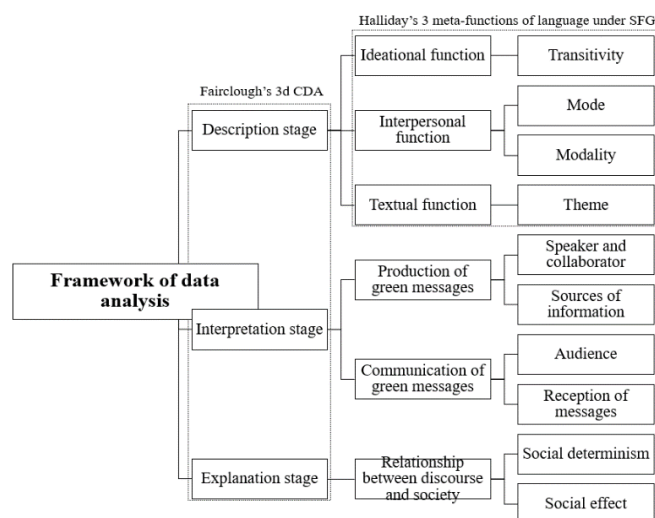


Figure 1. Framework of Data Analysis

Result and Discussion

Description of Textual Features

Ideational Function: Transitivity. The transitivity system encompasses 6 process types: material, mental, relational, existential, verbal and behavioral processes. The distribution of processes in sample texts is given in Table 1.

²https://m.weibo.cn/p/231642_starwelfare?uid=7736050480&wm=9006_2001&from=10CC295060&sourcetype=

Table 1. *Distribution of Processes in Celebrities' Green Messages*

Process type	Number	Percentage
Material process	1056	63.2%
Relational process	271	16.2%
Mental process	159	9.51%
Existential process	81	4.84%
Verbal process	64	3.83%
Behavioral process	41	2.45%
Total	1672	100%

In Table 1, the material process (63.2%), the relational process (16.2%) and the mental process (9.51%) constitute main types in celebrities' green messages, altogether taking up nearly 90%, whereas the existential process, verbal process and behavioral process are the lesser types in sample texts.

Known as the process of doing, the material process unfolds physical actions of one entity spatially or temporarily, which may or may not apply to another entity. First-person plurals (we) and third-person which appear as typical types of actors are given below in Tables 2 and 3. Words in [] are unnecessary elements of selected clauses but are reserved for the convenience of understanding; The words in () do not exist in sample clauses but are added to facilitate understanding.

Table 2. *Material Processes with First-person Plural Actors in Green Messages*

Actor (1 st pl.)	Process	Goal/range
We	have protected	biodiversity and ecosystems such as forests
(We)	[together] take actions to	practice low-carbon lifestyle

Material processes such as “have protected” and “take actions” can be viewed as model appeals for all kinds of social causes that are short and powerful, suitable for wide circulation on social-media platforms. First-person plural actors (we) collocating the material processes create a collective identity for the audience, underlining the fact that they are in a united front against environmental hazards with the performing celebrities.

Table 3. *Material Processes with Third-person Actors in Green Messages*

Actor (3 rd subject)	Process	Goal/range
Zero waste project	has realized [in 3 years]	a waste reduction of 769,750kg
Habitat loss, poaching, illegal trade, etc.	are threatening	the lives of wild tigers

Unlike first-person plural actors that are used to appeal for joint actions, third-person actors are employed to disclose information. Third-person actors provide information about how invaluable our mother nature is, how serious the environmental problems are, and what humans can do to mitigate environmental hazards. The material process “are threatening”, collocated by the actor “habitat loss, poaching, illegal trade etc.”, informs the audience of the degree of devastation that human activities have done to nature.

Interpersonal Function: Modality. The interpersonal function of discourse deals with interpersonal relationships that are established, maintained or changed in the course of grammatical choices. Modality is a semantic category that discloses the speaker's judgement and attitude toward the content of his speech, through modalization and modulation, the former of which measures the speaker's judgment of the

possibility and usuality of the truth in the text, and the latter of which measures the speaker's attitude toward the obligation in his speech and his inclination to perform a behavior. Due to the nature of social-media environmentalism, usuality is a lesser consideration in selected text, thus this study excluded usuality as an indicator of the speaker's judgement and attitude, and conducts an investigation of only the probability, obligation and inclination in selected text, through analyzing modal operators in celebrities' green messages.

As Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) distinguished different degrees of modal operators (high, medium and low) in English text, this study quotes Tian's finding (2022) on the correspondence between Chinese modal operators and English modal operators based on China Daily' bilingual reports, to provide an authoritative version of translation. The frequency and distribution of modal operators in celebrities' green messages on Sina Weibo are given below in Table 4.

Table 4. *Frequency and Distribution of Modal Operators in Green Messages*

Modal Operators							
Type	Degree	English	Chinese	Number			PCT
Probability	High	sure	一定	2	2	33	26.0%
		must	必然	0			
	Medium	will	会	26	26		
		should	应/应当/应该	0			
	Low	maybe	可能	5	5		
		perhaps	也许/或许	0			
Obligation	High	need	需/必需	25	28	67	52.6%
		must	必须	3			
		have to	须/须要	0			
	Medium	will	要	22	25		
		should	应/应当/应该	3			
	Low	may/might	可/可以	14	14		
Inclination	High	need to	必须/须要/须	2	2	27	21.3%
	Medium	want to	想/想要	10	10		
	Low	can	可/可以	9	15		
		willing to	愿/愿意	6			
Total				127	127	127	100%

In Table 4, obligation accounts for an overwhelming majority (52.6%) of all uses of modality, followed by probability (26.0%) and inclination (21.3%). The wide application of obligation in sample texts testifies advocacy as a key constituent of social-media environmentalism. The disproportionate distribution of obligation and inclination confirms that celebrities are comparatively hard on the audience in erecting obligations for the general public, while being lenient on themselves, which suits the purposes of top-down environmental communication. The choice of medium-probability modal operators reveals the speaker's deliberation in maintaining authority and authenticity.

Overall, the linguistic strategies evident in sample texts as required by the first research question are multifarious. All are chosen to realize the meta-functions of language to further fulfill the purposes of social-media environmentalism; that is, to effectively present information and appeal for public action in the social-media settings of information fragmentation and fast-food reading.

Interpretation of Discourse Practice

Production of Green Messages. Intertextuality is a key notion under Fairclough’s 3-dimensional paradigm of CDA which connotes the interdependence between texts as a way of interpreting textual production (Fairclough, 1992). Sources of information are a parameter of intertextuality, thus of text production. They are generally classified into specific sources, unspecific sources and unidentified sources. Each kind of information providers is counted and the proportions of different source types are calculated in Table 5.

Table 5. *Distribution of Sina Weibo Green Messages’ Information Source Types*

Source type	Info provider	Number		PCT
Specific sources	#Hyperlink#/Reposting	228	398	98.3%
	@Collaborator	135		
	Conference/Report	23		
	I	12		
Unspecific sources	Foreigners	2	3	0.741%
	The Japanese	1		
Unidentified sources	/	4	4	0.988%
Total	/	405	405	100%

In Table 5, specific sources account for as much as 98.3%, so that the proportions for unspecific sources (0.741%) and unidentified sources (0.988%) can be almost ignored. Choices of specific sources over unspecific sources or unidentified sources indicate the speaker’s conscious effort to enhance the credibility of information in environmental communication whose success depend largely on whether the provided information is real (authenticity of information), worthy of trust (credibility of information) and whether the audience choose to do as encouraged (effectiveness of advocacy). Beyond authenticity, liability is another factor under deliberation. Specific sources of information hold specific parties liable for false information and adverse consequences thereafter.

Communication of Green Messages. Communication of green messages on Sina Weibo simultaneously falls into a cognitive and behavioral process where the audience read, respond, process and hopefully internalize messages by the celebrity speakers. This study examines the comments in the comment section of a selected green message, in order to carry out the analysis on message communication. Weibo Celebrity White Paper 2020 has shown that Jackson Yee has been the top influential celebrity on Sina Weibo. Comments following his representative green message are therefore selected to demonstrate a general pattern of message communication. A typical green message by Jackson Yee is given below, followed by its comments which are sorted into different types in Table 6.

Join me in the #Vogue Environmental Clock-in# Relay initiated by @Angelica Zhang @Vogue Clothing and Beauty. I advocate using double-sided printing more often in daily life and work to reduce paper waste. Are you ready to practice pro-environment actions in your everyday life from day one?

Table 6. *Distribution of Comment Types Following Jackson Yee’s Green Message*

Comment type	Example	Num.	PCT
Responding to the text	Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets.	34	9.80%
Rephrasing the text	Practice environmentalism in every aspect of life	11	3.17%
Repeating (part of) the text	Double-sided printing! For environment protection!	28	8.07%
Responding to the speaker but relevant to the text	OMG! I’ve learned so much from you!	97	28.0%
	Alright, I’ll do as you said!		
Relevant only to speaker	Honey, I love U. Take care. Have meals on time	127	36.6%
Emoji only	[Heart][Heart][Heart][Heart]	12	3.46%
Irrelevant comment	Have a few more words to level up	38	11.0%
Total	/	347	100%

According to Table 6, comments relevant only to the speaker account for the largest percentage (36.6%), followed by comments responding to the speaker but relevant to the text (28.0%). The above two types of comments dominate the comment section with a combined proportion of 64.6%. They are speaker-oriented instead of message-oriented, like comments responding, repeating and rephrasing the message. The overwhelming proportion of speaker-oriented comments casts doubt on the effectiveness of celebrity environmentalism on social media platforms. The audience are distracted by the personal life and charisma of the celebrity speaker so much as reflected by the comment “Honey, I love U. Take care. Have meals on time”, so that the green messages are not well-received. However, the tremendous attention celebrities have brought to environmental issues must not be neglected. If the distraction is a cost and the exposure bonus, the main issue here becomes whether this cost is acceptable in the pursuit of bonus. NGOs’ choices to collaborate with celebrities in initiating environmental campaigns have made explicit their answers.

Explanation of Socio-cultural Practice

The explanation stage aims at the interconnectedness between discourse and society. Components of socio-cultural practice such as value, power, ideology and struggles are simultaneously the causes and products of language. In order to answer the third RQ, this section investigates the dialectical relationship between celebrities’ environmental discourses on Weibo and the social context in which it is rooted; that is, social determinism of the past social struggles on the present environmental discourses and social effect of the present environmental discourses on the future spheres of social creativity.

Social Determinism

Environmental communication has germinated in the US in the 1980s (William, 2022), backgrounded by human-made environmental degradation. The substantive needs for spreading environmental knowledge and safeguarding the natural environment set the stone for environmentalism to evolve into a discourse practice that involves celebrity participators and social media in China. It is in this same process that the structure of environmental texts becomes patterned as information and advocacy.

In addition to the demand for pro-environment actions, China’s environmental discourses can find root in the domestic and international political contexts. The construction of ecological civilization has been written into the report of the 20th National Congress of the CPC as a strategic task through which to achieve the second centenary goal. In the international arena, environmental problems are described under the framework of crisis and catastrophe with anthropocentrism at its core (Li, 2020). As China’s effort in mitigating environmental problems is rarely heard or seen internationally, the need for environmental communication from the Chinese perspective has grown increasingly prominent. Sina Weibo celebrity

environmental discourses serve to answer the political call from the central government to tell China's stories about the natural environment better.

Celebrity fanaticism and social-media entertainmentization as cultural phenomena play interrelated roles in cradling and constructing environmental discourses. The popularization of Sina Weibo as an integration of such cultural trends provides an ideal context for celebrity environmentalism to popularize in China. Through interactive mechanisms such as "like" "comment" "repost" and "favorite", fans of celebrities are saved from the passive position, where they can only receive information, to a more active position, where they are empowered to browse, search and demand information from the celebrities. Frequent interactions between celebrity speakers and the public imply that celebrities' green messages are top-down discourses aimed at broader bottom-up responses, by means of reverse power relations braced by social-media platforms. Now Sina Weibo has become one of the pillars of the communication industry in China with its monthly active user accounts surpassing 584 million. Its success can be attributed to its strategic marketization through celebrity identity authentication, intermediate interaction, trending mechanism, and hot topics, etc. Notwithstanding its successful marketing, Sina Weibo has not made the cultural trends, but has proved outstanding adaptability and flexibility to make of the trends. Celebrity fanaticism and social-media entertainmentization in general have determined Chinese celebrities' environmental discourses and the underlying power relations on the Sina Weibo platform.

Social Effect

The environmental discourses of celebrities on Sina Weibo are not only shaped by the socio-cultural context, but also have a significant impact on the broader socio-cultural environment. Celebrity environmental discourses on Sina Weibo have brought profound changes to traditional environmental communication. Primarily, the introduction of celebrity speakers into social-media environmentalism over the past decades has maximized public attention on environmental campaigns and the repercussions of environmental communication. As the popular netspeak goes, "celebrities always hold the key to boost online traffic". It is confirmed by this study that celebrity discourses encourage more responses from the audience, compared with discourses by other parts of the society, such as initiatives, organizations and other less well-known individual and collective bodies. Responses in forms of comments and actions are major indicators of influence and power.

Celebrities' environmental discourses on Sina Weibo consolidate domestic political power and redistribute international political power in the environmental arena. Responding to the national policy of ecological civilization construction, celebrities' environmental discourses in China have played an implicit but steadfast role in resolving the contradiction between the unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life. Responding to the administrative regulation to rectify the chaotic order in the entertainment industry and to impose a permanent ban on misbehaving celebrities, celebrity environmental endorsers and advocators on Sina Weibo have set an example for their occupation, which further fulfills the domestic political blueprint. On the international level, the Chinese narrative on the progress of carrying out environmental commitment serves to remove misunderstandings about China's environmental effort and reshape the distribution of power and interest in a discipline traditional to the western world, yet newly developed in China.

In addition, celebrities' environmental discourses on Sina Weibo interact with the aforementioned cultural trends of celebrity fanaticism and social-media entertainmentization. In the first place, such discourses add to celebrity fanaticism by enriching and modifying the public images of celebrity endorsers

for the natural environment. Appreciably, celebrity endorsers are appraised as socially responsible and eco-friendly, which modifies or even molds their public images as close to perfect, in turn contributing to the cultural trend of celebrity fanaticism. Some Chinese celebrities like Zhou Xun and Li Bingbing have also expanded their overseas markets, with their environmental slogans circulated outside of China. Moreover, celebrities' environmental discourses reverse rather than maintain the trend of social-media entertainmentization. Traces of entertainment are rare in Sina Weibo environmentalism, which covers an array of serious topics, from climate change, deforestation, and ocean acidification, to biodiversity loss. Discussions on such serious topics to a large extent run counter to social-media entertainmentization, a selling point of the Sina Weibo platform. However, the Weibo platform is still a winner of celebrities' environmentalism. As one of China's internet titans, Sina Weibo has led the way for domestic enterprises to undertake social responsibilities on the one hand, and monopolized celebrities' environmental communication on the other hand.

Conclusion

This thesis conducts a critical discourse analysis on celebrities' social-media environmentalism in China. Sample texts are retrieved from the Sina Weibo platform accessed via the honor roll of "Starlight League for Public Welfare". The retrieved data are treated under Fairclough's three-dimensional model that identifies three key stages of CDA.

The description of textual features focuses on the transitivity and modality of sample discourses, drawing on Halliday's three meta-functions of language in systemic functional grammar. As for transitivity, it is found that the uneven distribution of six process types serves the functions of the sample texts. The material processes are used to spread scientific information of environmental hazards and incidents, and to appeal for collective actions rather than individual actions against environmental degradations. As for modality, it is found that the speakers' preference of medium-probability modal operators over high- or low-probability modal operators indicates their attempt to mark the provided information as authentic and accurate, although some scientific knowledge has not yet acquired universal recognition. The speakers' preference of high-obligation and low-inclination modal operators reflects their high demand of the public and low demand of themselves, although this phenomenon belongs to habitual usage of language.

The interpretation of discourse practice involves analyses on the production and communication of celebrities' green messages on Sina Weibo. It is found that sources of sample discourses are mostly specific as opposed to unspecific or unidentified, which increases the credible authenticity of the provided information on the one hand and avoids the liability of false information on the other hand. Comments on the green messages suggest that the audiences are distracted from green messages. Notwithstanding distractions, celebrities' green messages on Sina Weibo have contributed to environmental communication in China, in that they enrich China's environmental discourses and bring exposure to environmental incidents.

The explanation stage explores the social determinism and social effect of the sample discourses. It is found that the socio-cultural contexts that have cradled sample discourses involve the need for collective action in the environmental sphere, the need for Chinese environmental discourses in domestic and international political arenas, and the popular cultural trends of celebrity fanaticism and social-media entertainmentization. On the other hand, celebrities' Sina Weibo environmental discourses have contributed to environmental mitigation and the development of environmental communication, consolidated the domestic political power and changed the balance of power in international politics; reinforced the cultural

trend of celebrity fanaticism by modifying celebrities' images as compassionate and socially responsible, and undermined the trend of social-media entertainmentization by introducing serious environmental issues.

References

- Abidin, C., Brockington, D., Goodman, M. K., Mostafanezhad, M., & Richey, L. A. (2020). The tropes of celebrity environmentalism. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 45(1), 387-410.
- Alibaba. (2022). Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) report. Retrieved Dec 17, 2022, from <https://www.alibabagroup.com/en-US/esg>.
- Anderson, A. (2011). Sources, media, and modes of climate change communication: The role of celebrities. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 2(4), 535-546.
- Boorstin, D. J. (1992). *The image: A guide to pseudo-events in America*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The forms of capital*. (Trans. Nice, R.). In J. G. Richardson, (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Brooks, S. K. (2021). FANatics: Systematic literature review of factors associated with celebrity worship, and suggested directions for future research. *Current Psychology*, 40(2), 864-886.
- Bugden, D. (2022). Denial and distrust: Explaining the partisan climate gap. *Climatic Change*, 170(3-4), 34.
- Chao, C. (2022). Weibo is an efficient platform for everyone to participate in environmental protection. Retrieved on Dec 17, 2022, from https://henan.china.com/news/roll/2022/0909/092022_310560.html
- Cox, J. R. (2018). *Environmental communication and the public sphere* (5th ed). Thousand Oaks, Calif., Sage Publications.
- Duthie, E., Verissimo, D., Keane, A., & Knight, A. T. (2017). The effectiveness of celebrities in conservation marketing. *PloS One*, 12(7), e0180027.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and text: Linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 3, 193-217.
- Fairclough, N. (1995a). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995b). *Media discourse*. New York: E. Arnold. New York: Routledge.
- Ferris, K. O. (2007). The sociology of celebrity. *Sociology Compass*, 1(1), 371–384.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*. Routledge.
- Hanna, P., Kantanbacher, J., Cohen, S., & Gössling, S. (2018). Role model advocacy for sustainable transport. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 61, 373-382.
- Holmes, S., & Redmond, S. (2006). *Framing celebrity: New directions in celebrity culture*, (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Johansson, N., & Henriksson, M. (2020). Circular economy running in circles? A discourse analysis of shifts in ideas of circularity in Swedish environmental policy. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 23, 148-156.
- Leipold, S., Feindt, P. H., Winkel, G., & Keller, R. (2019). Discourse analysis of environmental policy revisited: Traditions, trends, perspectives. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 21(5), 445-463.
- Li, K. (2018). Analysis of the operational features and development trends of Sina Weibo. *Audiovisual News*, (1). 120-121.

- Li, M. & Cao, J. (2023). Discourse change, subject evolution, and localization reflection – A review of China’s environmental communication research in the past 10 years. *Media Observation*, (03), 70-79.
- Li, Y. (2020). Construction of environmental communication discourse: Using Chinese as a method. *Journal of Social Sciences of Hunan Normal University*, (04), 136-140
- Meng, L., Duan, S., Zhao, Y., Lü, K., & Chen, S. (2021). The impact of online celebrity in livestreaming e-commerce on purchase intention from the perspective of emotional contagion, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 63(1).
- Nasir, M. H., Habib, A., & Yousaf, M. (2022). Climate change and media representation: A multimodal discourse analysis of clean green Pakistan policy from eco-linguistic perspective. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics & Literature*, 6(1), 198-211.
- Olmedo, A., Milner-Gulland, E. J., Challender, D. W., Cugnière, L., Dao, H. T. T., Nguyen, L. B., ... & Verissimo, D. (2020). A scoping review of celebrity endorsement in environmental campaigns and evidence for its effectiveness. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 2(10), e261.
- Park, S. (2020). How celebrities’ green messages on Twitter influence public attitudes and behavioral: Intentions to mitigate climate change. *Sustainability*, 12(19), 7948.
- Priest, S. H., Stenhouse, N., & Thompson, J. (2016). *Communicating climate change: The path forward*. London: Springer Nature.
- Rahmasari, G., & Nurhayati, I. K. (2019). Implicit participants in mental process: A functional grammar analysis. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literacy*, 3(2).
- Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rubin, R. B., & McHugh, M. P. (1987). Development of para-social interaction relationships. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 31, 279–292.
- Sansone, R. A. & Sansone, L. A. (2014). I’m your number one fan: A clinical look at celebrity worship. *Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience*, 11(1–2), 39–43. ISSN 2158-8333. PMC 3960781. PMID 24653942.
- Sina Weibo. (2022). Introduction to starlight celebrity. Retrieved Dec 23 from https://gongyi.weibo.com/h5/stars/rule?ua=HUAWEI_weibo_12.12.2_android_android10&from=10CC295060.
- Tian, X. (2022). A corpus-based study on the norms of English translation of modal verb in the government work report. *Shanghai Translation*, (05), 20-25.
- William, J. (2022). Environmental communication: An overview. *Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism*, 12(4).
- Wodak, R. (2001). What critical discourse analysis is about: A summary of its history, important concepts and its developments. In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer, (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 1-13). London: Sage.
- Wright, C., & Nyberg, D. (2022). The roles of celebrities in public disputes: Climate change and the Great Barrier Reef. *Journal of Management Studies*, 59(7), 1788-1816.

Discourse Analysis of Russian and American Mainstream Media Regarding the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: TASS and CNN as Examples

Runyi Li, Ranran Xue*, Yu Qiu

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email:3200100080@zju.edu.com

[Abstract] The Russian-Ukrainian conflict escalated on February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a “special military operation”. The media coverage of the war plays a crucial role in shaping the international public opinion. The mainstream media in each country, from different perspectives, conveys different signals and political metaphors. In this paper, TASS and CNN are selected as the subjects of study, and their political metaphors are analyzed in a discursive manner. The paper also analyzes the differences in the discourse strategies and public opinion guidance of international media news reports.

[Keywords] political metaphor; the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; TASS; CNN

Introduction

Discourse deals with the interrelationship between language and society and ideas, while the key role played by language in social life is closely linked to sociology. A great deal of relevant research has led us to understand that not only are social practices or discourses ideological, but ideologies are produced by them (van Dijk, 1998, p. 33). Zaychikova (2003, p. 55) identifies three basic features of discourse: 1) it is anchored in texts, 2) it has a cognitive basis, and 3) it has ideological markers; these features are the basis for analyzing any type of discourse. A survey of a large number of discourse types (Thompson 1996; Zadorin, Burova & Syutkina 1999; Wodak, 2009, etc.) shows that some of them (especially literary, political and media oriented) have strong pragmatic, cognitive, ideological and cultural motives.

The use of such discursive metaphors is exacerbated by political conflict, so this paper selects media coverage during the Russia-Ukraine conflict as the main object of study. This paper will select as corpus the reports and related commentary discourses on the political event of Russian-Ukrainian military conflict by two people, CNN and TASS, in the Russian-American mainstream media, which cover almost all dimensions of political discourse and have a certain degree of relevance. At the same time, this paper focuses on analyzing and comparing the wording and length of the Russian and American mainstream media’s reports on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the thought patterns reflected behind them, which is characterized by a new corpus and a strong sense of the times and has a certain research value.

Literature Review

Due to their strong political color and the particularity of the object they reflect, political metaphors are not only different from the metaphors whose aesthetic function dominates in literary style, but also from the metaphors whose semantic functions are very clear in scientific and technological articles. The study of political metaphors has aroused great interest among contemporary scholars and has become one of the most important directions of modern metaphor study.

The study of political metaphors is originally based on rhetoric. The perspective of rhetorical criticism formed in the works of E. Black (1965) and M. Nichols (1963) in the 1950s brought an ideological turn to

*Corresponding author. Email address:ranyu06@163.com

Western rhetoric. Scholars in this school have devoted themselves to analyzing and revealing the ideological symbolism and speaker's intention hidden in the literal meaning of rhetoric.

In 1980, American linguists G. Lakoff and M. Johnson put forward the theory of conceptual metaphor in their book (*Metaphors We Live By*) (Lakoff, 1980), which marked the study of metaphor moving into the cognitive stage from the stage of rhetoric. Metaphors are no longer just a language phenomenon, but also shape people's way of thinking. Metaphors are ubiquitous in our thinking and life, and it is a main way for human beings to understand the world (Lakoff, 1991).

The research on political metaphors in Russia is generally similar to that in the West. It has undergone a major transition from rhetoric to cognition. Now the cognitive perspective has become the mainstream of research in this field. The research on political metaphors under the cognitive framework is developed from multiple levels.

Looking at the development of political metaphor research, we can find that the development of political metaphor research in Western countries is relatively mature, with research results from the perspective of various disciplines. Russian political metaphor research has entered the stage of cognitive research and is in the process of rapid development. There are very few studies on political metaphors in Chinese academic circles, and relatively abundant research in English academic circles. Scholars in Russian academic circles have gradually begun to pay attention to political metaphors. But in general, compared with the West, there are relatively few theoretical or practical studies on political metaphors from the perspective of cognition in China, and a complete research system has not yet been formed. Therefore, we believe that this paper is an innovative attempt to conduct a comparative study of political metaphors regarding the Ukrainian conflict in the media of Russia and the United States based on the more mature conceptual metaphor theory and hope to thus expand the research perspective of domestic political metaphors.

Metaphorical Analysis of the TASS Article

Organic Body Metaphors

Body parts: head (голова), foot (нога). “Перекалывають, как у нас говорят, ответственность за происходящее с больной **головой** на здоровую”. (“They shift, as we say, the responsibility for what is happening from a sick head to a healthy one.”)

In its commentary, the TASS news agency metaphorically blames Russia for the West's behavior while it continues to supply Ukraine with weapons, “transferring the responsibility for what happened from a headache to a healthy mind”. NATO's actions are the root cause of the Ukraine crisis, the “headache” caused by the West. Russia, on the other hand, refers to itself as a “healthy mind”, believing that it is being blamed for the double standards and hypocrisy of the West.

“перевернулось с ног на голову” Since the feet are the most downward part of the body and the head is the most upward, the phrase is used in Russian to indicate a complete reversal of the situation, which is a vivid image. It also expresses dissatisfaction with Italy's drastic change in attitude toward diplomatic relations between the two countries because of the Ukraine crisis.

Wound (рана). Запад приходит устанавливать свой порядок, по итогам остаются кровавые, незаживающие **раны**, язвы международного терроризма и экстремизма. (24 FEB) (“The West comes to establish its own order, as a result, there are unhealed wounds, ulcers of international terrorism and extremism.”)

Wounds are also a common political metaphor, using the bleeding and wounding of the human body as a metaphor for the politically inflicted misery of the people. The image describes the tragedies caused by NATO, led by the United States, all over the world as a way to fight the West in public opinion, to negate what the West is doing in the international situation, and thus to justify the Russian side.

Enemies (враг), Friends (друг) and Allies (союзник). “Ну ладно, не хотите видеть в нашем лице друга и союзника, но зачем же делать из нас врага?” (22 ФЕВ)

Enemies, friends and allies are very common political metaphors, especially in war. And Putin uses these terms to describe Russian-American relations, anthropomorphizing the state and using them as a metaphor for politically allied states and dissidents. This more distinctly and prominently expresses the further deterioration of Russian-American relations in the context of the deteriorating situation between Russia and Ukraine. It also adds an atmosphere of “war” between the two countries.

Mechanical Metaphors

Corridor (коридоры). The “humanitarian corridor”, which is repeatedly mentioned in the Russian media, refers to the safe evacuation of foreigners in Ukraine granted by the Russian side and is also used as a metaphor for a safe space free from military interference. By repeatedly referring to this corridor as a way to evacuate innocent civilians, the Russians are demonstrating their humanitarianism in the court of public opinion.

Bridge (мост). “Выстраивания мостов, усиления экономических, культурных отношений” (12 АПР) (“Building bridges, strengthening economic and cultural relations”)

Bridges are structures used to connect two land masses and are often used to denote communication between two regions. The metaphor is also used in Russia for diplomatic relations.

Club (клуб). Это позволит обеспечить баланс внутри “клуба” таких стран. (“This will ensure a balance within the “club” of such countries.”)

A club is, first of all, an organized group of people or its premises where people gather for recreational activities. At the same time, the people involved in the club are those who share some interests. The Russians use the club as a metaphor for all the countries that are opposed to Russia, expressing the fact that these countries are in close communication with each other as if they were in a club. The recreational nature of the club is also worth thinking about, and this expression reflects Russia’s disdain for “anti-Russian organizations”.

Game (игра).

Как коллективный Запад играет в политические игры по принципу “свой - чужой”
(15 АПР)

(“How the collective West plays political games on the principle of “friend or foe”.”)

Due to the special place and role of games in human activity, the metaphorical pattern “Life is a game...” is widely used in all spheres of communication. There is no exception in the field of politics, where a wide variety of political activities are often compared to a game. Moreover, both the setting, rules, process and outcome of the game itself, as well as its characteristics, are simultaneously entertaining and competitive, which coincides with politics.

Analysis of Metaphors in CNN Articles

Organic Metaphors

Home. (“But after the maneuvers ended, the Russian forces didn’t go **home**.”) (Feb. 28th).

Here the Russian mainland is called the home of those military weapons in order to express the strong dissatisfaction and condemnation of the U.S. over the war since Feb. 24th.

Heart. (“And even if Russian forces are unable to encircle it, it will still be an almighty battle for them to get to the **heart** of it.”)

The heart of the city is used as a metaphor for the center of the city. The heart is one of the most important organs of the human body and is located in the center of the human body, which expresses the importance of the center of the city.

Master. (“The 26-year-old met CNN at a reception center for displaced people in Kryvyi Rih, where he broke down in tears, admitting he was embarrassed to be turning to charity. But Moscow was a **master** he would not serve.”) (Jul. 21st Russia claims it liberated Ukraine’s south, but hundreds flee each day)

The comparison of the Moscow to a master gives the Moscow a strong authoritarian, dictatorial color.

Canary. (“Telenko describes one recent photo of tire damage on a multimillion-dollar mobile missile truck, a Pantsir S1, as the **canary** in the coal mine for Russia’s logistical efforts.”) (April 14th)

By describing Russian logistical trucks as canaries, this points out that Russia’s means of transportation are flashy but impractical, and, at the same time, that there are logistical difficulties on the Russian side and corruption in the use of military funds. This serves to create a public opinion that Russia is doomed to defeat.

Long grass. (“But the EU has a long history of doing unexpected things, even throughout this crisis. And more often than not, these debates become a war of attrition among countries unable to see eye-to-eye, before being kicked into the **long grass** for another day.”) (Jun.17th)

Long grass gives a sense of clutter and desolation and is often used in American literature to describe desolate places, using long grass to describes the politically awkward situation in Ukraine, which shows the intractability of the Russian-Ukrainian problem.

Mechanical Metaphors

Wall. (“He thought he could roll into Ukraine and the world would roll over. Instead, he met a **wall** of strength he never imagined. He met the Ukrainian people.”) (March **)

The story was written at the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war, and here the metaphor of wall is used to describe strength. It deepens the concept of the house as a nation, emphasizing that the strength of the Ukrainian people is like a wall, hard and strong enough to withstand the war.

Orientation. Orientation refers to the organization of another conceptual system using concepts that express space, such as up and down, front and back, inside and outside, on and off, depth, center-edge, and so on. These kinds of metaphors are closely related to the characteristics of our physiological constitution and the way we observe things.

Councils are already bracing themselves for a logistical “cliff **edge**” fast approaching even for those Ukrainians who are currently happy with their UK hosts. (Jun. 27th Uprooted by war, some Ukrainians in the UK now face homelessness alone)

The UK’s acceptance of Ukrainian refugees is nearing its limit, using the edge of the cliff to demonstrate its danger and urgency. This emphasizes the tragic situation that the war has brought to the

Ukrainian people, the chaotic effect that the influx of refugees has had on European countries and tries to reinforce the Russian culpability for starting the war.

Lights. (“Moscow can knock out the **lights** across Ukraine, but it cannot, it will not, extinguish the Ukrainian spirit,” he added.) (Nov. 3rd)

As opposed to darkness, “lights” refers to brightness, to the good and happy life of the people. By saying that Russia has extinguished the light in Ukraine, the actual reference here is to the reality of misery, emphasizing the magnitude of the harm done to the Ukrainian people by the actions of the Russians. But even more so, to emphasize the strength of Ukrainian resistance mentioned in the second half of the sentence.

Comparison of Metaphors in Russian and American Political Discourse

Commonalities and Differences in the Organic Metaphorical Patterns of Russian and American Political Discourse

Commonalities. The organic metaphorical patterns in Russian and American political discourse are all based on the conceptual metaphor that “political reality is like the human organism (ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ РЕАЛИИ - ЭТО ЧЕЛОВЕЧЕСКИЙ ОРГАНИЗМ)”. The metaphorical patterns of “physiology” in Russian and American political discourse have a great deal in common: they are characterized by stability and are not significantly altered by changes in the social context of political discourse. This is because the metaphorical model is based on the initial “bodily experience” of human society and is therefore stable and solid in human consciousness.

The frequent use of anthropomorphic metaphors in the political discourse of both Russia and the United States, and these metaphorical patterns related to “human beings” fully demonstrate that human beings take themselves as the model for understanding the world. As the most direct object for experiencing and perceiving the world, human beings take the “human body” as a standard for thinking, and even an important “yardstick” for measuring the experience of the political world.

Differences. Under the influence of national cultures, religious beliefs and modes of thinking, there are also differences in the organic metaphors in Russian and American political discourse. Under the influence of Orthodox Christian culture, the metaphorical framework of “big family” in Russian political discourse emphasizes the wholeness and unity (or spirit of fellowship) of the Slavic peoples, and has a strong sense of national identity, believing that all the Slavic peoples are a unified “big family”. The metaphorical framework of “brotherhood” in Russian political discourse emphasizes the Slavic national identity and a strong sense of religion, considers all Slavic peoples to be “brothers”, and believes that religious kinship takes precedence over blood kinship (Charteris-Black, 2004).

In the political discourse of the United States of America, the “person” of the United States of America is clearly defined; the United States has allies, friends, partners and presents itself as a leader in the international community. It is easy to see from this metaphor that the United States considers itself to have assumed a great responsibility and considers this responsibility to be an obligation, a duty. On the contrary, when referring to Russia, it does use the identity of master as a metaphor for Russia. These metaphors reflect American political values and express the American view of the world situation during the Russo-Ukrainian War.

Commonalities and Differences of Mechanical Metaphors in Russian and American Political Discourse

Commonalities. In Russian and American political discourse, there are a large number of metaphors with “socio-cultural activities and their related concepts” as the origin, which are all focused on the concept of socio-cultural domains, reflecting the interaction between human beings and society.(Béla Janky,2019) The most representative of these metaphors is the metaphor of war, which is widely used in Russian-Chinese political discourse because of the universality of experience in the field of war for all mankind.

Differences. First, CNN’s political discourse in the U.S. has more value judgment tendencies and emotional coloring in its social metaphors. For example, the word “dirty” is used to express the impropriety of Russia’s methods, and the word “dark” is used to show the tragic situation of the Ukrainian people. This subjective and emotional use of words makes the U.S. political discourse more infectious and inflammatory and occupies a more favorable position in the arena of international public opinion. In contrast, the political discourse of Russia’s TASS news agency is more dispassionate, favoring descriptive language and often not using emotionally powerful modifiers.

Third, the social metaphors of Russian political discourse contain more game (or gambling)-related metaphors, which are closely linked to Russian national culture. The use of game metaphors facilitates the visualization of various political concepts, making political discourse closer to the people and more widely disseminated. On the other hand, the United States, as a country ruled by elites, emphasizes more on the professionalism and authority of political speeches, and wants to establish its image as a leader in the world, so there are fewer metaphors related to games.

Conclusion

Metaphors are ubiquitous in individuals’ lives. People not only articulate their thoughts with the aid of metaphors, but also utilize metaphors in their thinking and comprehension of the world. Metaphors are not solely a linguistic occurrence, but also a cognitive process. On the basis of this cognitive characteristic, political metaphors differ significantly from metaphors in other fields such as literature, science and technology due to their strong political color and the distinctly nature of the objects they reflect (Unwala, & Ghori, 2015).

As the Russian-Ukrainian conflict intensifies, the mainstream media in both Russia and the United States are attempting to promote their own political metaphors. These metaphors reflect each country’s particular political values and view of the world (Tan, Lee, & Pang, 2014). In Russia, this is centered on state authority and security, while at the same time the political discourse in the Russian TASS is relatively more dispassionate, favoring descriptive language and often not using emotionally powerful modifiers; in the U.S., it is centered on freedom, democracy, and opposition to dictatorships, with terms that are much more intense and rooted in U.S. society and culture. As the conflict progresses, it is likely that these metaphors will continue to evolve within the mainstream media of both countries.

By analyzing the political metaphors in the TASS and CNN articles, this paper enhances our comprehension of the discourse systems of Russia and the United States, along with the discursive tactics utilized in their media campaigns. It can also help us better comprehend the evolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the attitudes and positions of Russia and the United States.

References

- Black, E. (1965). *Rhetorical criticism: A study in method*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Janky, B. (2019). Changing connotations and the evolution of the effect of wording: Labeling asylum seekers in a political campaign. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 31(4), 714-737.
- Lakoff, G. (1980). *Metaphor and war: The metaphor system used to justify war in the Gulf*. Berkeley, CA: UC Berkeley.
- Lakoff, G. (2003). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nichols, M. H. (1963). *Rhetoric and criticism*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Perrez, J., Reuchamps, M., & Thibodeau, P. (1991). *Variation in political metaphor*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Tan, C., Lee, L., & Pang, B. (2014). *The effect of wording on message propagation: Topic- and author-controlled natural experiments on Twitter*. Cornell University.
- Thompson, S. (1996). Politics without metaphor is like a fish without water. In J. S. Mio, & A. N. Katz, (Eds.), *Metaphor*.
- Unwala, A., & Ghori, S. (2015). Brandishing the cybered bear: Information war and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. *Military Cyber Affairs*, 1(1).
- van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology a Multidisciplinary Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory, and methodology. In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer, (Eds.), *Methods for Critical Analysis*, (pp. 1-33). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zadorin, I., Burova, Y., & Syutkina, A. (1999). *Mass-media and mass political consciousness: Mutual influence and interdependence. Russian society: The formation of Democratic values?* (pp. 175-197). Moscow: Gandalf.
- Zaychikova. (2003). *Metaphors in political discourse*, 55.

Individual Engagement in Cultural Space Construction: A Case Study of Cultural Heritage Conservation in Daicun Village, Zhejiang Province

Xiaoqi Lu, Jianping Yang*

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3200104221@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] This article explores the cultural meanings of spaces within and outside Daicun Village in Xiaoshan, Zhejiang Province. Drawing on the idea that space is both generated and generative, the study investigates how cultural meanings of space are constructed, interpreted, reflected, and rebuilt by individuals with diverse living experiences in specific times and places where they awaken collective memories and find their cultural identities. To analyze this phenomenon, the study focuses on the daily behaviors and movements of three groups of people: Grandpa Ren, the villagers, and the visitors. By transcending boundaries of past and present, tangible and intangible, as well as time and space, diversity and openness of space's cultural meanings are uncovered. The research employs a qualitative approach, analyzing interactions and conversations between people and space, as well as actions and values associated with space, examining the relationship between external forms and internal meanings of space, and exploring the interplay between different spaces. Through this inquiry, the article highlights the significance of individual engagement in shaping meanings of cultural space and calls for further research on Chinese cultural discourse different from the West.

[Keywords] Daicun Village; individual engagement; collective memories; identity; intangibility; space; ethnographic narration

Introduction

With the rapid advancement of globalization and urbanization, various aspects such as population migration, logistics and capital aggregation and dispersion, as well as information transmission between the physical and virtual realms, have become increasingly accelerated. Culture has also become an integral part of globalization, characterized by the intermingling and clash of different cultural practices resulting in the blurring of regional boundaries and a weakened sense of identity and belonging for individuals. The dominance of Western influences in the process of globalization has often led to imitation and acceptance of Western material civilization and cultural values by countries in the Global South, contributing to a crisis of cultural identity and a loss of indigenous traditions and values. As Smith (2006) emphasized, cultural heritage has an indispensable role in shaping and preserving collective identity, which serves as a repository of shared experiences and knowledge. In the context of cultural globalization, conducting research on cultural heritage can serve as a means to address such crises, offering individuals and communities an opportunity to reconnect with their roots, gain a deeper understanding of their history, and ultimately bolster their sense of identity and belonging. Liu (2022) considers cultural heritage an essential carrier that reflects value of local culture and art. To reconstruct a cultural identity distinct from the Western discourse, it is crucial to focus the scope of cultural heritage research on specific spaces within China and consider individuals as the subjects of cultural research.

Daicun Village, originating from the Song Dynasty and characterized by a history marked by both large-scale migrations from Henan Province to Zhejiang Province and smaller migrations within Xiaoshan, provides an appropriate case for studying the construction and continuity of cultural space. The Ren family reveres Ren Buqi (BC545-468), one of Confucius' 72 wise disciples, which reflects their adherence to

*Corresponding author. Email address: yjp_lxj@163.com

traditional Confucian culture. Present-day villagers also place great emphasis on the preservation and promotion of their collective memories and spirit. Xiaoshan, as a county falls under the administration of Shaoxing, Ningbo, and Hangzhou successively. Replete with unique “personalities” and a distinct cultural identity, this area enables the study of individuals’ participation with discernible cultural characteristics.

On October 5, 2022, our group of six people from *Cultural and Heritage Study* course embarked on fieldwork in Daicun Village, guided by the following research questions: What aspects of the past do villagers inherit, and how do they bring about changes and development in the present? How do people's daily actions, experiences, and activities relate to and interact with the meaning of cultural space in Daicun Village? How do the villagers, as diverse individuals, perceive, preserve, construct, and reconstruct collective memories and cultural identities within the coexistence of multiple interpretations of cultural space? By employing relevant theories of cultural space, this article seeks to illustrate the significance of individual engagement in the construction of indigenous cultural heritage, using Daicun Village as an example. Furthermore, it advocates for the appreciation and respect of diverse and open interpretations of cultural heritage brought forth by different individuals, thereby safeguarding humanity’s outstanding cultural achievements in a living form and for an extended period.

Literature Review

Cultural Heritage and Individual Engagement

Cultural heritage is difficult to define. It is rarely given precise definitions and is more often categorized through descriptive language, for instance, “material” culture and “symbolic” culture, “high” culture, and “mass” culture (Hall, & Neitz, 1993, pp. 18-24). The traditional Western concept of cultural heritage emphasizes the preservation of physical objects, architectural structures, and historical sites as tangible representations of a society’s past. This perspective often focuses on objects of historical value, such as artwork, manuscripts, and monuments. Regarding cultural values and meanings as inherent in these tangible things, it is often associated with age, monumentality, and aesthetics.

In the contemporary context, the concept of cultural heritage has transcended traditional frameworks, embracing a more inclusive approach that acknowledges diverse perspectives and voices. Lowenthal (1998) delves into the complexities of heritage interpretation, encouraging individuals to question and evaluate existing modern interpretations of heritage, which prioritize selective narratives and idealized versions of the past. The works of Harrison and Hitchcock (2003) and Meskell (2002) also exemplify this shift, emphasizing the agency of local communities and the imperative of involving stakeholders in heritage practices. Laurajane Smith, in her book *Uses of Heritage* (2006, p. 1), challenged this Western conception of heritage. She delineates a nuanced perspective on heritage, emphasizing its intangible and dynamic nature compared to traditional Western views. She posits that tangible things serve merely as material symbols of cultural values and meanings, with the true significance lying in the memories and knowledge they carry, aiding individuals in identity recognition and construction. These values and meanings are not inherent to the things themselves but are rather bestowed upon them through the cultural processes and activities in which individuals engage. Heritage is not just about the past or material things, but rather is “a process about engagement, an act of communication and an act of making meaning in and for the present” (Smith, 2006, p. 1). The subject of such process is undoubtedly people. When a particular cultural site and its meanings are studied, the individuals who have interacted, are interacting, or will interact with it need to be the focus.

Cultural Space and Ethnographic Narration

The main proposition of this article is consistent with Smith's viewpoint, emphasizing the recognition of diverse interpretations of cultural heritage due to different individual engagement. It underscores that the construction of cultural heritage is a dynamic process, subject to contemporary needs, rather than being static or only related to the past. Consequently, this study employs ethnographic narratives to depict the indigenous culture of Daicun Village, as it the only way to authentically present the process of deconstructing and constructing cultural identity and collective memory is through individual participation and daily behavior. This is in line with the spirit advocated by *The Nara Document on Authenticity* of 1994, which saw cultural diversity as "a source of multiple standards for judging 'authenticity'" (Song et al., 2017, p. 228). Simultaneously, "cultural space" is highly valued in this article as it serves as the setting for such process. The work of Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) underscores the interconnectedness of cultural heritage with certain spaces, demonstrating how the spatial context of heritage sites contributes to the construction of narratives and memory. Furthermore, *Uses of Heritage* (2006) highlights space as both constructed and influential, with cultural meanings continuously shaped by diverse individuals in and for the present.

"Space" in this article contains rich and broad connotations. Spaces can be linked to each other even if they are in different geographical locations and historical periods, because "space" relates "to both extension and duration" (Thomas, 2011, p. 120) and it contains a "temporal dimension" within a geographical dimension (Niedźwiedz, 2017, p. 72). Based on this, the study of Daicun Village can transcend boundaries of the past and present, the tangible and the intangible, as well as time and space. In the preface to *Landscape and Power*, Mitchell said he preferred to change the book title to "Space, Place and Landscape" (2002). He has discussed similarities and differences among the three terms, i.e., "landscape", "space" and "place". Speaking roughly, "landscape" is to be consumed, based on a series of picturesque scenes; "place" is a specific area; "space" is to be practiced (2002, p. 5). As one of the examples in the book explains, a street defined by geometry in urban planning (place) becomes a space through pedestrians. Obviously, space is largely influenced by human existence and practice. However, Mitchell does not support that there is a clear demarcation and superiority of the three terms. He would like to integrate them into a dialectical "triad" (2002, p. 4). The idea of Space mentioned in this article is consistent with this view, which is a collection of landscape, place, space, etc.

Three Groups of People in Daicun Village

To narrate diverse and open space in Daicun Village, the study focuses on the daily behaviors and movements of three groups of people, that is, Grandpa Ren, the villagers, and the visitors (our research group). Through their active engagement in cultural heritage, the villagers find their cultural identity in the inheritance of collective memories of the past, and they construct increasingly diverse cultural spaces that allow cultural heritage to continue in richer contents, and to be more closely linked to the needs and developments of the present. Given that cultural space is constructed with the engagement of people, why do outsiders like us become an important factor when interpreting cultural meanings of spaces related to Daicun Village? According to Geertz, fieldwork is to obtain the experience clumps connected between the symbolic unit and the meaning pivot, which can be used to locate the meaning coordinates of a specific discourse of behaviors in the cultural network (Wu, 2022, p. 2). The act of understanding what the local people understand is a meaningful cultural interpretation. Coming to this cultural space, we become variables in it. Based on the three groups of individuals, this article is divided into three corresponding parts.

Grandpa Ren: Transcending Boundaries of the Past and the Present

Do Something for the Village

Grandpa Ren (任水顺) assumes a pivotal role as our guide during the fieldwork in Daicun Village. His personal narratives are deeply ingrained in the collective memory of the villagers. As a major participant and leader in compiling their village chronicle, renovating their ancestral hall, and renewing their genealogy, Grandpa Ren is not only a witness and narrator of the Ren family in the past, but also an architect shaping the present identity and trajectory of the Ren family. Whether conveyed through oral or written form, what Grandpa Ren passed on to the villagers –and us– is not a village chronicle, an ancestral hall, or a genealogy itself, but the engagement of countless ordinary individuals related to it, as well as the construction process of social and cultural values and meanings symbolized by these physical things. As stated by Wang Y., it is more crucial “to read the world” than “to read the word” (2020, p. 32).

A cultural corridor in Daicun Village records his stories. Following four decades of educational service, Grandpa Ren, having retired from Daicun Primary School, redirected his focus towards public service and the preservation of indigenous culture. In 2007, Grandpa Ren helped to compile the village chronicle, for which he went to the district library and archives by bus to collect cultural and historical materials. In 2013, he volunteered as a “supervisor” in the reconstruction of their ancestral hall. Subsequently, he devoted significant time and effort, collaborating with fellow villagers to meticulously renew the genealogy of the Ren family.

Grandpa Ren is not the only person dedicated to the village. The *Biography of Ren Tianjin* introduces another notable figure: a man wearing a bamboo hat and straw sandals, with a distinctive cloth sash around the waist. Engaging in fieldwork and visiting local farmers formed his daily routine. With aspirations to revitalize the village through industrial development, he established factories in the 1970s, making substantial contributions to the economy. Before Grandpa Ren, Ren Tianjin was a representative of those who selflessly served the village in the last century. However, he too was not the first such person. These people are each more like a symbol, whether it be Ren Tianjin in his time or Grandpa Ren today. They draw inspiration and perpetuate a noble spirit from the past, in and for “the present”.



Figure 1. Grandpa Ren (shot by us) and Ren Tianjin (from his biography)

“Forgetting the Past Means Betrayal”

On the morning of our fieldwork, we listened to the narration of Grandpa Ren, who vividly portrayed the history of Daicun Village. According to his recollections, the villagers used to engage in the production of *maozhi* (毛纸, a rudimentary form of toilet paper) for a living, which discouraged people from other options, such as studying, becoming an official, or working outside the village.

In the past, the villagers lacked awareness regarding the importance of education and culture, but now it is totally different. On the eve of China’s policy of Reform and Opening-up, the backward industry of *maozhi* has withdrawn from the stage of history. Gradually, a collective realization of the importance of

education dawned upon the village. The cultural corridor in the village displays a list of individuals who have been admitted to universities, indicating the considerable esteem now accorded to educational achievements. The reconstructed ancestral hall further underscores this transformative concept. Positioned at its entrance are two plaques adorned with the Chinese characters of *jinshi* (进士) and *wenkui* (文魁) which are designations of honor in the ancient imperial examination system. Flanking both sides of the gate, they encircle another plaque bearing the inscription of “Ancestral Hall of the Ren Family”. This spatial arrangement creates an evocative atmosphere as if it were a distant yet intimate dialogue between the past and the present.



Figure 2. Plaques on the Gate of the Ancestral Hall

The past of Daicun Village is in the past, but it has not been forgotten. At present, no one in the village can make *maozhi*, but everyone knows it. They preserve the art of making *maozhi* in the form of wall painting, as shown in Figure 3. Consequently, their descendants can remember the past when their ancestors made *maozhi* to seek a livelihood. A culture related to *maozhi* was generated and constructed by the villagers in the past, which is generative and makes contemporary villagers value the fruits of labor more. This is part of the collective memory of the Ren family for generations, just as the first sentence of the *Introduction to maozhi* says, “Forgetting the past means betrayal (忘记过去，就意味着背叛).” The tangible painting has transmitted the enduring spirit of the Ren family, characterized by resilience and hard work. Simultaneously, it serves as a means for villagers to commemorate their foundational identity rooted in a historically disadvantaged small village.



Figure 3. Wall Paintings Showing the Whole Process of Maozhi Making (from processing raw materials to selling finished products and the Introduction to maozhi)

Reconstruction of the Memory

From the year 2007, the three reconstruction projects that Grandpa Ren engaged in were all major events in Daicun Village. Though it is impossible for all of the villagers to directly participate in these events as Grandpa Ren has done, it is the consensus of the whole village not to let the past fade in their memory. In fact, this is a collective concept of change in the development of Daicun Village. According to Grandpa Ren, village officials in the past, due to their lack of education, did not realize the historical value of ancient

buildings. Through the development of education and the widespread acceptance of cultural heritage preservation, they have become more adept at safeguarding spaces such as the ancestral hall along with their inherent cultural significance, thereby ensuring the remembrance of past events associated with these spaces.

The ideas of the villagers have changed. They have new interpretations of the past and they cherish more the historical and cultural values of the past, but they never forget the past. On September 22, 2012, a grand ancestor worship ceremony was held in Daicun Village and the renovation of the Ren's Ancestral Hall began, which was completed two years later. According to *Reconstruction of the Ren's Ancestral Hall in Daihu* (《埭湖任氏宗祠重建记》), the Ren family rebuilt the ancestral hall for the purpose of searching for their family roots and carrying forward their ancestral virtues (任氏裔孙为寻根报本, 弘扬祖德, 激情倡议, 复建宗祠). In memory of their ancestors, the architecture of the ancestral hall is inspired by the style of building in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Located in the center of the ancestral hall, a striking stage as shown in Figure 4 caught our eyes. Its roof structure is shaped like a chicken coop, which was restored by the villagers in imitation of ancient times.



Figure 4. The Stage for Chinese Opera Performance

Memory is relative and eternal. The present villagers' actions of reconstruction are not only to remember their past ancestors but also to be remembered by future generations. As written in the Preface to Genealogy of the Ren Family (《任氏宗谱序》), "Live up to the ancestors and make future generations flourish (上告慰先人, 下宜子孙绵延)." As time goes on, memories of the Ren family about the past will be constantly updated, which will make their collective memory more vital and eternal. There is always a new past and a new present, the link between which will always be there as long as the Ren family exists.

The Villagers: Transcending Boundaries of the Tangible and the Intangible

Space is not Alone

No space is an island. While the location and scale of a space may, in fact be fixed, it does not make sense to determine whether it is fixed. What really matters is the people in the space. Their behaviors and movements make the space break through its physical form and come alive. Then, space is given specific meanings under people's construction. Most villagers as ordinary people cannot know the complete history of the Ren family or the detailed values of their culture. However, their daily behaviors are special expressions of spaces in Daicun Village, and the collection of these individuals together builds the whole space. Even if unconsciously, the villagers have participated in the dynamic process of deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural heritage. In her article *When is a Place not a Place* (2011), Martha Radice argues that anthropologists and locals interpret meanings of a place differently, "Sometimes a place that an anthropologist identifies as meaningful turns out to be less so to the people who lead lives there." We cannot decide subjectively and arbitrarily what is the cultural meaning of a space, but we can find invisible expressions and interpretations of space's meaning in the visible daily life of the local people. Daicun Village described in this article is not a simple space, but a "space with space".

Space Meaning Expressed with Everydayness

In the center of Daicun village, the ancestral hall of the Ren family stands there, facing south. People are in awe of it but not away from it. Unlike a museum, the ancestral hall is not strictly protected or separated from people's daily lives. On that day, we saw two elder men lying and watching TV in the long corridor on one side of the ancestral hall. They appeared relaxed and comfortable, with their legs in deck chairs:



Figure 5. Two Elder Men Watching TV in the Ancestral Hall

Leaving the ancestral hall, we saw the “Matchmaker Bridge” (媒人桥) to the east and the cultural corridor to the west. Since ancient times, the villagers have adhered to an unwritten custom that every couple in their wedding ceremony must cross the Matchmaker Bridge to get good luck. Although it looks like an ordinary bridge, it has witnessed plenty of lovers and their love. Such custom is not a grand ceremony, but a simple act. However, it has lasted for a long time, and the blessings it contains for marriage are in accordance with traditional family values, which expect a couple of lovers to have a baby and a prosperous family early. A simple action of ordinary couples gives this ordinary bridge extraordinary meanings. The villagers of course are familiar with it; we learned about it when visiting; you can understand it when reading; but, a person who has not been told the custom will not be aware of the meaning when passing by the bridge. One section of the cultural corridor shows the process of creation of their village song. Originally, the village song was composed by a music teacher. After the first draft was formed, the villagers got together to discuss and gave suggestions that had nothing to do with technical aspects such as the melody of the song. Those villagers just wanted to add more of what they had seen and heard on a daily basis in the lyrics:

“We have a scene of a stone cow lying on the guard; we have Lingxi Culture; we have the beautiful Fairy Lake. Can we add all these?”

“Besides, there are many schools near the village, and the sound of reading can be heard by us. The cultural atmosphere is so good! It can be in the village song.”

The ancestral hall, Matchmaker Bridge, and the cultural corridor form the central space of the village, around which the villagers' houses are scattered. Wandering around those narrow roads of the village, we heard a touching story: Grandma Dai has been bedridden since 2008, unable to take care of herself, and even incontinent. Her son-in-law, Hong Renxian (洪任贤), in his 70s looked after her for three years without complaint. He patiently fed the old woman every day, combed her hair in the morning, and tucked her in bed at night. Under his good care, Grandma Dai never had bedsores and her room never smelled bad. The story has made a deep impression on us, and we still remember it long after we left Daicun Village. Actually, filial piety is recorded in the rules and instructions of the Ren family, such as, “Story of a well-behaved son, grandson or brother in our family should be recorded and rewarded (一族中有孝子慈孙或兄弟义让者, 亦当以列传扬其美).” It was only after a careful search that we discovered these words. The

behavior of Hong Renxian does not speak aloud about filial piety, but it vividly explains the core value and spirit of filial piety in an individual's unique way.

The three small spaces located in the center of Daicun Village have been constructed by the villagers; at the same time, they provide new spaces for the villagers to live and think. They record the refined life of the villagers; meanwhile, the villagers are constantly conducting new interactions with them. Space is generated and generative. Closely intertwined with people's daily lives, these visible small spaces create larger invisible spaces with dynamic meanings. The cultural space of Daicun Village symbolizes the common form of traditional Chinese rural landscapes. It witnesses villagers recognizing their identity and expressing their sense of belonging to the land in the most unpretentious manner. Daily activities unfolding in this space convey unique cultural and spiritual values rooted in the past yet still significant in the present.

The Visitors: Transcending Boundaries of Time and Space

The Past and the Present

Before lunch, we came to the second floor of the ancestral hall to see the revised genealogy. What attracted us most was a map by the door, which displayed the distribution of Daicun Village's water system in the past. Looking at that map, we could hardly match it with the village nowadays. However, it is this map, which has lost its practical function, that connects people and things at different times: Daicun Village in the past, the person who photographed or drew the map, the person who hung the map on the wall and his awe of the ancestors' wisdom, us standing in front of the map and our imagination of these relevant people, and "you" who are reading my words. Many people and things interact with each other and create meanings without even realizing it. Many cultural processes are not necessarily explicit, which may be hidden in very small actions. This reveals the significance of ethnographic research, which shifts people's focus on cultural heritage from grand museums, monuments and other places to spaces where daily activities occur.

Are We Really Outsiders?

Not far from the gate of the ancestral hall hangs a lantern with three Chinese characters "怡怡堂" (Yiyi Tang) written on it. The origin of the name is relevant to Jiangsi Park (江寺公园) in Xiaoshan. The ancestors of the Ren family originally lived at the foot of Beigan Mount (北干山) in Xiaoshan, owing many residences. Among them, "Yiyishan Tang" (怡怡山堂) was a place for the family to study and rest. It was now located in Jiangsi Park. To learn more information, three members of our group went to Jiangsi Park. On that cloudy afternoon, we did not achieve what we expected. Yiyishan Tang has gone forever and has been replaced by a sculpture gallery. Though our visit to the park lost its original meaning, it did have meaning. Though Yiyishan Tang has gone, its past is still known and the place where it used to be filled with new meanings. On that afternoon, the three of us were looking for stories from the past while other visitors in the park were telling new stories. There were friends sitting on benches and chatting. There were couples walking hand in hand. There were adults playing with children. Those people and their activities constructed new meanings of the space. The connection between Yiyi Tang in Daicun Village and the previous Yiyishan Tang in Jiangsi Park with the replacement of buildings seems to be lost, but the trip of our group members has added new links to the two spaces.

On the one hand, space can be extended to richer meanings. The engagement of new generations can construct new space meanings. Different spaces that are far apart can be connected due to the movement of people no matter whether the people belong or do not belong to the spaces. On the other hand, space can be shrunk to individual meanings. Even in the same space at the same time, people will have different

understandings and interpretations due to various life experiences. Diversity and openness of meanings cannot be ignored in the meaning-making of spaces.

Conclusion

Individuals inherit traditions, spirits, and values from their collective memories, and creatively construct new cultural memories and spaces due to their own experiences in their own times, so culture is eternally generated and generative. Interpretations of space meanings will be diverse due to the engagement of different individuals. At different times, the meaning of a space changes with new actions conducted by new people. Spaces geographically different can also be connected by the movement of people. The existence of humans makes the cultural significance of space no longer monotonous. Hopefully, the diversity and openness of interpretation of space meanings will be more inclusive. Based on different historical origins and development statuses, different nations have varying interpretations of cultural heritage. Although the Western-dominated concept of cultural heritage has been challenged, we should still be wary of the ambiguity of our own identity. Therefore, it is very necessary to focus on the cultural spaces of our own nation itself and individual engagement within these spaces. Only in this way can we build an identity rooted in our national traditions, cultural values, and historical concepts, construct a unique indigenous discourse to interpret cultural heritage, and firm confidence and equal communication in the context of cultural globalization.

References

- Hall, J. R., & Neitz, M. J. (1993). *Culture: Sociological perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Harrison, R., & Hitchcock, M. (2003). *The politics of heritage*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Liu, Y. (2022). Inheritance and protection of Dongguan's intangible cultural heritage under the background of Social Sciences. *Social Sciences*, 11(6), 404.
- Lowenthal, D. (1998). *The Heritage Crusade and the spoils of history*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Meskel, L. (2002). The intersections of identity and politics in archaeology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31(1), 279-301.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. (2002). *Landscape and power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Niedzwiedz, A. (2017). The multivocality of space and the creation of heritage: new shrines in an old city. *Anthropological Notebooks*, 23(3), 63-86.
- Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Song, J., Ivey, B., & Huang, Y. (2017). *Cultural discourse: China-US intangible cultural heritage forums*. Guangzhou: Sun Yat-Sen University Press.
- Thomas A. T. (2011). Space. *Material Religion*, 7(1), 116-23.
- Tunbridge, J. E., & Ashworth, G. J. (1996). *Dissonant heritage: The management of the past as a resource in conflict*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Wu, Z. (2014). Let fragments speak for themselves: Vernacular heritage, emptiness and Confucian discourse of narrating the past. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20(7-8), 851-865.
- Wang, Y. (2020). *Multicultural vegetarian meal*. Taipei: Yuanzhao Publishing Co., LTD.
- Wu, D. (2022). Culture and the likeness of text: Geertz and the emergence of ethnographic "poetical" forms. *Journal of Central South University for Nationalities*, 43(3), 10.

Sentiments and Attitudes towards the Belt and Road Initiative in German-speaking Countries: An Analysis Based on Twitter Data

Xuan Zhou, Fei Lian*¹

School of International Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

Email: 3190103212@zju.edu.cn

[Abstract] The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an international project proposed by China in 2013. German-speaking countries, such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland are located along the Belt and Road. However, there has been no systematic study on the public sentiments and attitudes towards this initiative in these countries based on social media data. To investigate this question, we employed the appraisal theory and conducted statistical and sentiment analysis using 8313 German tweets posted between September 2013 and December 2022. The results reveal a persistent seasonal growth of the attention to the BRI since 2013, which was subsequently disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, people in German-speaking countries had rather positive attitudes towards the BRI, while the related comments after the breakout tend to be negative. An in-depth examination of attitudes shows that the German-speaking countries feel ambivalence towards the BRI, since they expect the opportunities created by this international initiative, but are also concerned about potential threats.

[Keywords] The Belt and Road Initiative; attitude; sentiment analysis; Twitter

Introduction

The effective implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global cooperation project first introduced by China, relies on a multifaceted interaction of several elements. Of utmost importance is the acquisition of comprehension and endorsement from the international community (Xuan & Lin, 2021). Since its proposal in 2013, the BRI has garnered significant international media coverage. Previous studies have examined news about the BRI in different countries from various perspectives, including agenda formation, content analysis, and image-building (Zhao, Guo, & Che, 2016; Zhao & Guo, 2020; Xue, 2015). German-speaking countries, positioned along the BRI's geographical route and holding substantial influence in Europe, play a crucial role in shaping the project's implementation in Europe. Hence, understanding the perspectives and engagement of the German-speaking public regarding the BRI is of great significance. Research has found that German mainstream media have significantly expanded their coverage of the BRI, shifting focus from Asia to Europe, indicating an "East-West" shift from 2013 (Li & Li, 2018; Li, 2019). Concurrently, the reporting attitude has evolved from detached observation to a combination of questioning and cooperation (Li, 2019). However, it is noteworthy that these research findings predominantly rely on traditional print media sources such as *Der Spiegel* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, with limited exploration of opinions expressed on social media. In recent years, social media has become a more extensive and swifter platform for people to express their viewpoints on. Consequently, social media platforms have turned out to be important channels for studying public opinions within the international discourse arena (Zhao & Dou, 2022). In order to reveal the public attitudes towards the BRI in German-speaking countries on Twitter, this study conducted a sentiment analysis and discourse analysis based on collected German tweets.

¹ Corresponding author. Email address: lianfei@zju.edu.cn

Theoretical Foundation

In the field of linguistics and communication studies, the term “sentiment” refers to the expression of positive or negative assessments that are communicated through language (Taboada, 2016). The academic community widely employs the sentiment analysis technique to examine many types of data, including written and spoken communication, to quantify the underlying emotional aspects. This study was undertaken within the broader framework of appraisal theory to further explore how individuals express their opinions and beliefs through written communication. Appraisal theory, grounded in systemic functional linguistics, has been formulated to analyze the interpersonal significance of language and assess its role in conveying attitudes, emotions, and evaluations (Martin & White, 2003, p. 56). The attitude system utilized in this study was derived from appraisal theory. Attitude pertains to an individual’s evaluative stance towards a particular subject, entity, or event. The system is comprised of three distinct subsystems: (1) Affect refers to the outward manifestation of emotions or feelings, encompassing a range of states including happiness, sadness, or fury. (2) Judgment means engaging in assessing the merits or demerits of a particular subject or situation, involving the determination of its ethical or moral implications. (3) Appreciation refers to conveying favorable or unfavorable assessments grounded on aesthetic or ethical deliberations (Zhao, Guo, & Che, 2016).

Methodology

Research Questions

As an influential social platform that provides extensive real-time coverage of global events and current affairs, Twitter is widely used in German-speaking countries. According to Zhao & Dou (2022), Twitter stands out among other social media platforms due to its extensive dissemination of information and the prevalence of political discussions. As such, Twitter is crucial for analyzing public opinion on global political issues. For this reason, this study will focus on popular discourse on Twitter in German-speaking countries. Based on the background above, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Has there been a shift in public attention on Twitter to the Belt and Road Initiative in German-speaking countries from 2013 to 2022?
2. How has the sentiment of the German-speaking public towards the BRI changed on Twitter?
3. What distinguishable characteristics can be identified in the BRI-related German tweets in terms of the attitude system?

Data Collection

In this study, the Octoparse Crawler was employed for data collection, specifically targeting tweets containing the keyword “neue Seidenstraße”. Although “ein Gürtel, eine Straße” is the literal German translation of the BRI, it was not used as a search term because it is primarily used to describe the concept of the “neue Seidenstraße” (Li, 2019). Meanwhile, the sample results prove that the German-speaking public mostly uses “neue Seidenstraße” to refer to the BRI, which is in line with other scholars. (Li & Li, 2018). The data collection period spans from September 2013 to December 2022. Throughout the data collection process, a total of 9,583 tweets were gathered. In order to ensure data availability, we filtered out the irrelevant tweets and tweets written in other languages, resulting in a final dataset of 8,313 tweets for the following study.

Analytical Methods

In order to examine the change of attention, this study used SPSS for statistical analysis. All collected tweets were statistically analyzed, and a dynamic visual representation was created to outline the trends. For the purpose of exploring the pattern of sentiment fluctuations of the German-speaking public towards the BRI on Twitter, lexicon-based sentiment analysis was adopted. The lexicon used is SentimentWortschatz (Remus, Quasthoff, & Heyer, 2010), a reliable source for analyzing sentiment in German texts (Fehle, Schmidt, & Wolff, 2021). Within this lexicon, each word and phrase is allocated a sentiment score from -1 to 1, wherein -1 signifies a profoundly negative sentiment, 0 denotes neutrality, and 1 conveys a distinctly positive sentiment. With the aim of delving deeper into the BRI-related German tweets, the present study annotates the words reflecting attitudes in the acquired corpus based on the attitude system of appraisal theory, which are classified into three main types of Affect, Judgment and Appreciation according to their different semantic functions. The annotation was carried out using the UAM Corpus Tool 3.3x, a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) software that includes a complete annotation system for the attitude system and is widely used in the academic community.

Results and Discussions

Changes in Public Attention Amid the Pandemic

As demonstrated in Figure 1, there has been a consistent upward trend in the number of tweets since 2013, peaking in 2019. This observation is consistent with the findings of Li (2019), suggesting that the BRI has attracted increasing attention from the German public since its inception. This phenomenon can be ascribed to many variables, among which is the “win-win cooperation” promoted by the Initiative (Shao, Cai, & Yu, 2018). Moreover, there is a more significant seasonal variation in the number of tweets, with consistent peaks in May, June, and July, and troughs in December and January. This pattern aligns with BRI-related events, such as international cooperation summits, the first of which was held in Beijing in May 2017, and the second in April 2019, which serve as platforms for participating nations to discuss and promote the Initiative. Although the second summit was affected by the pandemic, there were still more than 5,000 leaders and high-level representatives from more than 150 countries and 90 international organizations, which demonstrated its influence. However, despite the typically low and stable number of tweets related to the BRI in January each year, an exceptional increase occurred in January 2020, surpassing the previous January’s average threefold. This abrupt rise indicates an unprecedented counter-cyclical increase in attention following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the trend graph shows a decline post-2019, coinciding with the onset of the pandemic, affirming the pandemic’s impact on the Initiative. This impact can be observed in two key aspects. Firstly, the pandemic escalated tensions in China’s relations with the West, with some Western powers using it to criticize the BRI and obstruct China’s global governance efforts. Secondly, the pandemic led to temporary halts in some BRI projects, exposing recipient countries to debt risks and generating adverse reports about project terminations, security concerns, and geopolitical challenges. (Zhong & Jin, 2022). Notably, this declining trend is not continuous, as public attention gradually revived in mid-2020 and stabilized. This trend suggests that the exceptional attention triggered by the pandemic has a limited duration. As the COVID-19 pandemic normalizes and related multilateral activities resume, it is anticipated that there will be a renewed and gradual increase in public attention towards the Initiative.

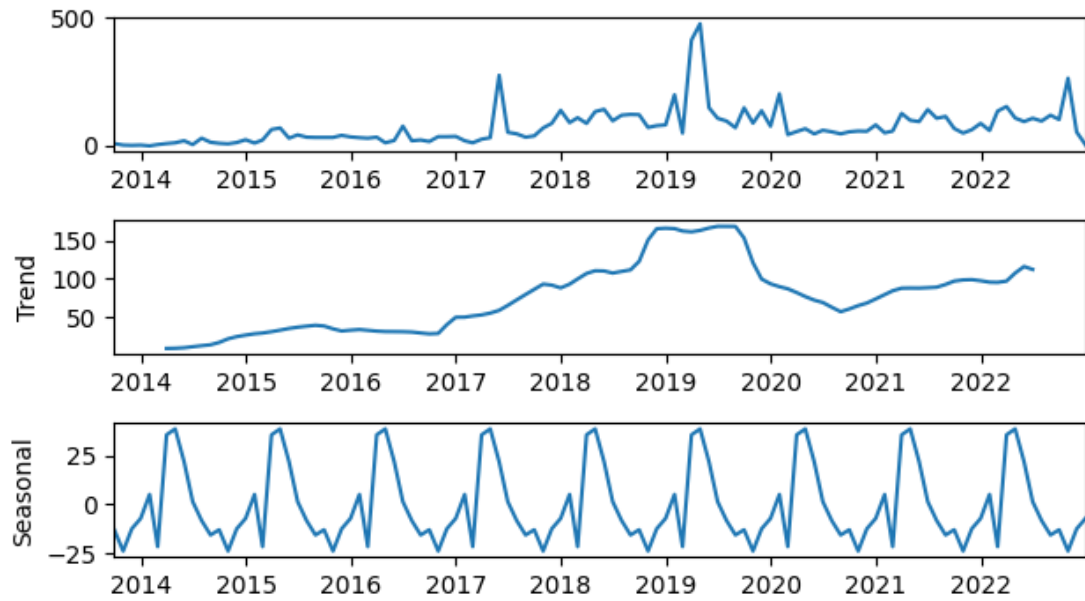


Figure 1. Time Series Analysis of the Number of Tweets

Fluctuations in Public Sentiment during the Pandemic

As shown in Figure 2, the sentiment of the German-speaking public exhibits a consistent pattern characterized by alternating periods of rising fluctuations and subsequent slow declines throughout the whole duration. From 2013 to 2019, the prevailing sentiment polarity leaned towards the positive spectrum. However, there has been a noticeable shift towards negativity since 2019. This alteration further implies that the pandemic has impacted the sentiment of the German-speaking public towards the BRI. This shift in sentiment could also be attributed to the perception held by certain individuals in the Western world that China was the virus' place of origin, leading to subsequent stigmatization (Liu, Xie, & Bo, 2023). Consequently, this negative perception extended to initiatives proposed by China, such as the BRI. It highlights the idea that the Initiative itself does not solely influence public attitudes and sentiments towards the BRI, but can also be shaped by perceptions of other aspects of China.

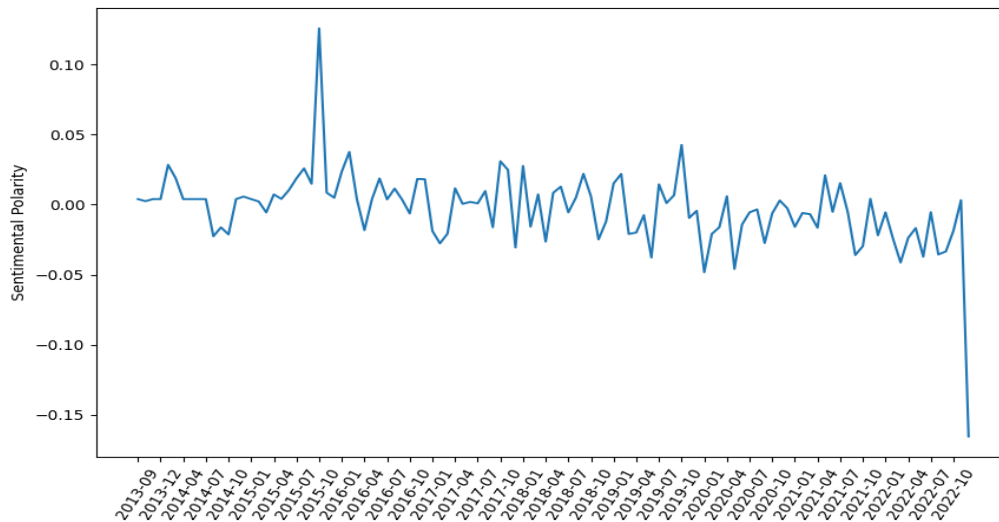


Figure 2. The Trend of Sentiment Polarity (2013 - 2022)

Complex and Multidimensional Public Attitudes

Based on the progress of the Initiative, this study divides the period from 2013 to 2022 into four phases: the initial phase (2013-2015), the build-up and development phase (2016-2018), the deepening and expansion phase (2019), and the pandemic phase (2020-2022). Python was employed to select the top twenty words with the highest collocation frequency with “neue Seidenstraße” in each phase, using mutual information (MI) as a measure of collocation strength. Only those with an MI value greater than two were considered to identify significant collocations and the collocation span of the node words was set at 4:4, following Sinclair (1991). The high-frequency words were selected and then labeled within the attitude system of the appraisal theory. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Attitude System Labeling

Phase		2013-2015	2016-2018	2019	2020-2022
Affect	Un/Neigung				
	Un/Sicherheit	gezielt, offenkundig	dratisch, ehrgeizig	invasiv, faschistisch	bedrohlich, besorgt, geopolitisch, militärisch, politisch
	Un/Zufriedenheit Un/Glücklichkeit				
Judgement	Fähigkeit		wirtschaftlich, ökonomisch	wirtschaftlich	wirtschaftlich,
	Beständigkeit				
	Normalität	blockierend	erst, einzig	erst	
Appreciation	Reaktion	interessant, umstritten	spannende, interessant, willkommen	umstritten	kritisch
	Komposition	gigantisch, international, transeuraisch, gewaltig, riesig, kulturell, systematisch, offen	groß, tausendjährig, historisch, riesig, gigantisch, international	alt, groß, international, global, massiv, kollektiv, direkt, riesig	global, digital, gigantisch, langsam, stagnierend
	Bewertung	gemeinsam	gut, wichtig	gut, toll, sehenswert, aufstrebend, angenehm	unangemessen, gut, wichtig, richtig

Regarding Affect, the public's primary concern regarding the BRI revolves around security issues, namely those related to geopolitics and the military. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these fears. The increased sensitivity observed can be linked to the enduring prominence of the "China threat theory" promoted by Western media. As a result, despite China's consistent assertion of non-hegemonic intentions, there is a mounting apprehension among individuals that China's ascent may potentially engender hegemonic aspirations, thereby presenting a perceived menace to the security and stability of their own nations and regions (Piao, 2015).

As for Judgment, the public perceives the primary value of the Initiative as lying within the economic sphere. This perception also serves as a guiding principle for the ongoing advancement of the BRI in the post-pandemic era. Although the COVID-19 pandemic may have temporarily impeded its progress, the BRI presents itself as a prospective driver for worldwide rejuvenation and a robust advocate for economic well-being and expansion. Therefore, it is advisable to emphasize fostering economic advancement and endorsing the BRI in the era following the pandemic (Zhong & Jin, 2022).

In terms of Appreciation, people's sentiment has shifted from initially finding the Initiative interesting, but being undecided, to later perceiving it as attractive and welcome. Lots of positive words were used to evaluate the Initiative, such as good, important, great, worth seeing, promising, and pleasant. Nevertheless, there has been a resurgence in adopting an ambivalent or skeptical position, with a notable increase in the usage of negative language seen throughout the duration of the pandemic.

In general, the public attitude towards the BRI in German-speaking countries on Twitter is complex and multifaceted. They perceive it as an endeavor that presents opportunities and difficulties and are inclined to participate actively in it (Li & Li, 2018). The aforementioned intricacy highlights the general public's range of perceptions and sentiments regarding China's progress. On the one hand, remnants of Cold War-era thinking persist, characterized by notions of opposition, leading them to perceive China's rise as a challenge to Western development paradigms and economies. On the other hand, China's impressive economic growth holds a strong appeal, fostering optimism that Europe, including Germany, can benefit from engaging in collaborations related to China's BRI.

Conclusion

Based on 8,313 German tweets, this study employed the appraisal theory and conducted statistical and sentiment analysis to reveal the public perception of the Belt and Road Initiative on Twitter from September 2013 to December 2022 in German-speaking countries. The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis:

1. Public attention on Twitter to the BRI in German-speaking countries has changed from 2013 to 2022, displaying seasonal variations and a general upward trajectory. However, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted this trend, causing a discernible counter-cyclical oscillation.
2. The sentiment of the German-speaking public towards the BRI has gradually shifted from positive to negative on Twitter since the end of 2019, influenced by the negative association of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Attitudes expressed about the BRI are complicated and diverse. The public in German-speaking countries on Twitter believes that the BRI brings both opportunities and challenges, but it feels inclined to participate in the Initiative and share its dividend.

The study tried to transform abstract attention, sentiments, and attitudes into visual results through comprehensive and quantitative analysis. This data-driven discourse analysis turns out to be effective. However, it must be acknowledged that the tweets examined in this research solely reflect the viewpoints of a subset of online users residing in German-speaking countries. More data obtained from a wider range of platforms should be taken into consideration in the future.

References

- Fehle, J., Schmidt, T., & Wolff, C. (2021). *Lexicon-based sentiment analysis in German: Systematic evaluation of resources and preprocessing techniques*. Conference on Natural Language Processing.
- Li, Z., & Li, Y. (2018). Construction of China's image in German media: A case study of "Belt and Road Initiative" coverage in *Der Spiegel*. *International Communication*, 12(04), 53-64.
- Li, S. (2019). The perception of China's Belt and Road Initiative in German mainstream media: A critical discourse analysis of a corpus. *German Studies*, 34(02), 99-114+159.
- Liu, C., Xie, B., & Bo, S. (2023). From "China must go" to "China virus": Historical roots of American attitudes toward China. *Economic Quarterly*, 23(02), 731-747.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. (2003). *The language of evaluation, (vol. 2)*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Piao, G. (2015). New perspectives and strategies needed for China's image projection abroad: Insights from "super China". *Foreign Communication*, 2015(04), 18-19.
- Remus, R., Quasthoff, U., & Heyer, G. (2010). *SentiWS - A publicly available German-language resource for sentiment analysis*. International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation.
- Shao, B., Cai, Y., & Yu, X. (2018). An analysis of the "Belt and Road" image from the perspective of Western media: A corpus-based study. *Contemporary Foreign Languages Studies*, 2018(04), 40-47+108.
- Sinclair, J. M. (1991). *Corpus, concordance, collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Taboada, M. (2016). Sentiment analysis: An overview from linguistics. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 2(1), 201-226.
- Xuan, C., & Lin, S. (2021). "Belt and Road" Initiative from the perspective of cultural distance: Sentiment analysis of 4918 English news reports (2013-2019). *Journalism and Communication Research*, 28(06), 24-43+126.
- Xue, Q. (2015). The dissemination of the Belt and Road Initiative in the Arab world: Public opinion, practice, and recommendations. *West Asia and Africa*, 2015(06), 36-52.
- Zhao, Y., & Dou, S. (2022). Research on public sentiment in the international discourse space of overseas social media from the perspective of social constructionism: A computational communication analysis based on China-US trade dispute issues. *News Enthusiast*, 533(05), 14-19.
- Zhao, Y., & Guo, M. (2020). Taming of international news in strategic narratives: An analysis of "Belt and Road Initiative" coverage in Indian mainstream media. *International Journalism*, 42(08), 49-65.

- Zhao, Y., Guo, J., & Che, X. (2016). A study of the attitude of the UK towards the Belt and Road Initiative from the perspective of appraisal theory. *Information Studies: Theory & Application*, 35(10), 37-41.
- Zhong, X., & Jin, S. (2022). Framing of the “Belt and Road” in international mainstream English media under the background of the pandemic: A grounded research based on big data. *News and Communication Review*, 75(05), 15-36.