

Critical Stylistics: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

批评文体学：理论构建与方法论探讨

张璐 著
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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

批评文体学 : 理论构建与方法论探讨 = Critical
Stylistics : Theoretical Framework and Methodology : 英文 /
张璐著. — 郑州 : 河南人民出版社, 2015. 12
ISBN 978 - 7 - 215 - 09609 - 7

I. ①批… II. ①张… III. ①英语 - 文体论 -
研究 IV. ①H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2015)第 287808 号

河南人民出版社出版发行

(地址:郑州市经五路 66 号 邮政编码:450002 电话:65788075)

新华书店经销 河南鸿运印刷有限公司印刷

开本 710 毫米×1000 毫米 1/16 印张 15

字数 168 千字

2015 年 12 月第 1 版 2015 年 12 月第 1 次印刷

定价 : 48.00 元

Abstract

This dissertation proposes a tentative general theoretical framework and methodology for critical stylistics. By reviewing the current researches and practices on functional linguistics, critical linguistics and stylistics, we take the initiative to construct a suggested new framework and its corresponding methodology, which in this dissertation, serve as the major objectives of our study.

The framework offers the research range of critical stylistics in three essential parts, namely linguistic, social and anthropological analysis. The significance of the study lies in that although many linguistic studies have been made on each one of the three parts respectively, a general and systematic study on all three of them together is not yet seen so far.

In this dissertation, three parts of the framework are presented as analysis approaches, which share the same goal of identifying the hidden ideological meaning of the text. And we regard this goal as the objective of critical stylistics. In general, our study is based on factor analysis, with scientific methods, both quantitative and qualitative. In Chapter 6, we set a specific section (6.2.1) to discuss the scientific nature of these analysis methods.

As for linguistic approach, pattern analysis is used with statistic method to dig out the hidden ideological meaning. We choose transitivity, modality, and presentation of speech as three factors for the linguistic analysis in this dissertation. For each factor, we set up the analysis model, and define the linguistic patterns such as “Actor Shifter”, “Actor Eraser”, “Process Connector” etc. And specific methodological procedures on how to perform pattern analysis are given in descriptive detail and statistic case study respectively.

In social and anthropological approaches, we propose qualitative methods for the

research. We believe that social analysis can be collective or selective, which means we can either analyze all factors or select some significant factors to do the critical stylistic study. Selective analysis is a feasible solution to a certain degree, when the potential factors are various; for instance, our sample texts are from news media with certain news topics that we restrict to a specific aspect, hence choosing the related factors of these topics is appropriate to our study. And more, selective analysis can simplify the corresponding methodology of the theoretical framework to a more generalized degree, and put efforts on the study of the most important factors.

Therefore, we select the essential factors to perform social and anthropological analysis in this dissertation. The factors we select for social analysis are identified as significant to the ideological meaning of language, namely, ethnic and national origin (ENO), geographical identity and social stratification identity. The factors we choose for anthropological analysis are also potentially ideology-based, i. e. physical and psychological identity. For each proposed factor, we put forward the detailed analysis procedure, following by proper case studies to validate the appropriateness and correctness of the methods.

Results from case studies not only positively support the proposed methodology, but also help us understand the hidden ideological meaning of the texts by comparing sample texts from social, anthropological perspectives together. Even more, we assume that the style of a particular writer's sample texts can be applied to his/her other texts as well. We deliver a detailed discussion of this viewpoint in the case study of Chapter seven.

The major limitation of the present study is that we focus on media language, more specifically, news reports language analysis. We wish we could apply the methodology to different types of language, but due to the doubled or tripled necessary efforts, we leave it for future study. Another weak point is that our methodology is not validated with larger amount of sample texts, so the results may be conditionally correct and appropriate. We will keep it open for future practice with more time and efforts.

This dissertation falls into eight chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, which describes the motivation, basic tenets, necessity, significance, objective and methodology of the study. In Chapters two and three, literature review on the concept of style,

stylistics and critical stylistics are presented. The description of our theoretical framework and methodology of critical stylistics is proposed in Chapter 4. Chapters five, six, and seven discuss the analysis procedures and offer case studies of the three approaches respectively. The concluding remarks, Chapter eight, present our viewpoint on the efforts required for a qualified critical linguistic study which may be taken as our philosophical reflection on critical stylistics.

Keywords: Critical Stylistics; Framework; Methodology; Factor Analysis

内容提要

本文提出了批评文体学具有普遍性意义的理论框架及方法论。通过对功能语言学、批评语言学、文体学等的回顾研究,我们尝试构建了一个新的理论框架并探讨了相应的方法论,并将此作为本文的主要研究目标。

批评文体学的理论框架将其研究范围界定于三个主要方面,依次名为:语言分析、社会分析以及人类学分析。此研究方法的创新性在于尽管语言学家在这三个方面中的每个方面都做了很多分析,但是至今并没有一个能够把三个部分结合在一起的全系统研究。

在本文中,理论框架的三个部分是以分析方法的形式提出的,目的是发现隐藏在文本中的意识形态含义。同时,我们也将此定义为批评文体学的研究目的。总体上,我们的研究是基于因素分析的,使用的是定量和定性相结合的科学研究方法。在第六章有一节(6.2.1)我们专门讨论了定量和定性分析方法的科学性。

对于语言分析,我们采用模型研究的统计学方法来发掘隐藏的意识形态含义。我们选择及物性、情态和转述引语三个因素来进行该项分析。对于每个因素,我们建立了分析模式并定义了多个语言模型,如“行为主体迁移”、“行为主体隐藏”和“行为关联”等。同时,模型分析的具体步骤和语料分析也一并详细给出。

对于社会和人类学分析,我们主要采用了定性的研究方法。同时,我们认为,社会研究既可以是全面性的,也可以是选择性的,也就是说,既可以研究全部的因素,也可以选择重要因素来进行批评文体学研究。当潜在的影响因素数量较多时,选择性研究在某种程度上会成为更具可行性的方法。例如,我们对新闻媒体语料的选择是基于某个特定的话题的,因而选择与该话题相关的因素进行研究将更为恰当。另外,选择性分析可以简化理论框架及相应的方法论,并将研究力量投入到最重要的因素上。

因此,我们在社会和人类学分析中都采用了选择性因素分析法。在社会分析

中,我们选择了三个对意识形态含义有重要影响的因素,分别是种族与国家归属(ENO)、地域特性和社会阶层特性。而在人类学分析中,我们选择了同样具有潜在意识形态含义的生理和心理特性作为主要研究因素。我们对于提出的每种方法,都给予详细的步骤描述,并附以语料分析来验证方法的适当性和正确性。

语料分析的结果肯定了我们提出的方法论;社会和人类学两方面的对比性分析还能够帮助我们深刻理解文本所蕴涵的意识形态含义。我们更进一步提出,根据某个作者的文本的研究结果,可以预测出该作者在其他文本中的文体特点。关于这一点,我们在第七章的语料分析中有详细的阐述。

本研究的局限性主要在于,我们集中在对媒体语言的研究,确切地说是对新闻报道的语言分析。我们希望能把此方法应用到其他文本类型的分析中,但鉴于需要的精力会成倍增长,只能留待将来进一步研究。另外的一个弱点在于我们的方法论并没有用大量的文本语料来验证,因此所得研究结果的正确性和适当性是处于一定的条件限制下的。我们留待将来投入更多的时间和精力来实际验证。

本文共有八章:第一章绪论介绍了本研究的动机、原则、必要性、重要性、目的和方法等相关内容;第二、三章是对文体的定义、文体学以及批评文体学的文献分析及评论;第四章描述了批评文体学的方法论和理论框架;第五、六、七章是对具体分析方法、步骤和语料分析的详细阐述;在第八章的结论中,我们提出批评文体学研究必要的努力和素质要求,这个观点代表了我们对批评文体学研究的哲学感悟。

关键词:批评文体学;理论框架;方法论;因素分析

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Motivation of the study

We are living in an era of “information explosion” in which all kinds of information are approaching our daily lives within or beyond our consciousness. We can get information either from traditional mass media, such as newspaper, TV news, radio news, etc., or modern multi-media—Internet. The Internet news offers us a new perspective of reading news and information which is faster than all the traditional ones. The so called “information explosion” means the rapidly increasing amount of published information and the effect of this abundance of data. And more recently, individuals are no longer satisfied with just “reading” the news passively. They begin to write their own “blog”, a blending word for “web log”, which refers to an online, regularly updated journal or newsletter that is readily accessible to the general public by virtue of being posted on a website. Bloggers actively offer their personal views on every aspect of social life, including politics, sociology and critics, etc.. And most of the views come from their afterthoughts of news reading, or information receiving.

As linguistic researchers, we are wondering about the reason of the rapid popularity of blog^①: it offers individuals a chance of active reading instead of passive reading. A person puts forward his/her idea about certain news in his/her blog, and more people may join in the discussion of it. The problem is, these ideas or views are too personal to be principled or ruled in the pedagogical practices. That is to say, on the one hand, we approve of active reading; on the other hand, we are trying to find a scientific and linguistic way to do the active reading instead of an instinctive personal way.

① According to Technorati (www.technorati.com), the number of blogs doubles about every six months with a total of 35.3 million blogs as of April 2006.

The rising of blog is not accidental but inevitable with people's raising of consciousness. Individuals are becoming more and more critical in their reading, and listening as well. They try to figure out the truth covered by languages. At least, they believe so. This leads to an inevitable outcome that there may exist wrong or imprecise understandings which come from their subjective mood of them. Finding the implicit meaning or attitude in language in a scientific and linguistic way is the basic motivation of the present study—critical stylistics.

1.2 Basic tenets of the study

If we take the “blog” thing as a newly arisen public phenomenon of language meaning to a certain degree, the study of power and knowledge offered by social scientists should be taken as the original tenet of language study.

“Knowledge is power”, wrote Francis Bacon, the ideologue of science. Marx and Engels held the opposite view, in their equally famous dictum from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*^①: “The ruling ideas of an age have always been the ideas of the ruling class”. Behind the contradiction between the two statements lies a problematic relation between knowledge and power. What the powerful say can often be “right” because it is said by the powerful. But this cannot be the sole basis for their claim to be right. There may be occasions when the powerful are in fact right, and they need to distinguish between the two kinds of claim, based on knowledge or power. Similarly the less powerful may wish to conceal the grounds of their assent, separating the superior reason of their masters from their superior power.

Hence, language has become an increasingly salient element of the study of social practices which sees literacy (knowledge) as a key dimension of community regeneration and a part of the wider lifelong learning agenda. And in modern society, the exercise of power is increasingly achieved through ideology, and particularly through the ideological workings of language. It determines that the ideological nature of language should be one of the major themes of modern social science. Through an active and critical study of the language forms, we may find the attitudinal part lying in the forms; hence we find the

① Cf. <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html>.

ideological meaning of language. Thus, we have the basic assumption of critical stylistics: language is an essential part of social life and the study of language forms can help us pursue the ideological meaning of language.

Language analysis in social science is often strongly influenced by the work of Foucault^①, such as sociology, communication studies, political sciences, sociopsychology, etc. But often enough, the function and status of language have been neglected. Social scientists working on this tradition generally pay little attention to the linguistic features of texts. Although the study of the relationship between “language and power” or “language and politics” began a long time ago, the detailed and subtle approach from a critical point of view is certainly new. Critical stylistics aims to transcend the division between work inspired by social theory which tends not to analyze texts on the one hand, and work which focuses upon the language of texts but tends not to engage with social theoretical issues on the other.

Generally speaking, the study of anthropology is a branch of social science. Language users' physical and psychological identities are strongly influenced by their social identity, such as geographical identity, ethnic and national identity, social stratification identity, etc. But within the study of language communication, participants (both sender and receiver) are holding an important and indispensable position. Therefore, we bring out the anthropological study from social study to indicate its crucial and vital status in language analysis.

So, linguistic description, social study and anthropological study are the three essential and fundamental parts of critical stylistics. But the boundaries between them are blurred because of their close interrelationship. Linguistic description cannot be taken as simple as lexical, grammatical, or semantic description of text; it also includes study of different discourses, genres and styles. That is to say, linguistic description is “dynamic” because of the relatively consistent networking of social practices. Critical stylistics is concerned with continuity and change at the interrelationship between linguistic description, social analysis, and anthropological analysis. The link of these three aspects is made through the way in which language is analyzed in critical analysis

① Cf. Foucault (1972) and a brief introduction by Fairclough (1992a).