

中央高校基本科研业务费专项资金资助

赵 虹◎著

语类、语境 与新闻话语

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A Study on Straight News Reports of
International Air Disasters in *China Daily* and
The New York Times

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摘 要

当社会面临危机、人类生存面临挑战时,媒体有着义不容辞的责任通过其及时的新闻报道进行环境监测、信息传播及舆论引导。在新闻传播界,对突发灾难事件的纯新闻报道有着较强的规约性,无论是标题的选择、导语的安排,还是信息的提供、结构的组合,各国新闻记者和编辑都遵守着一定的写作规律。但与此同时,如何通过各自的报道发挥媒介功能,各国媒体在实践上却有着一些差异。受政治、经济、文化等因素的影响,不同的新闻媒体在面临同一灾难事件时可能会有不同的反应。

由于灾难事件具有极大的新闻价值,如时效性、冲突性、重要性等,因此也成为新闻媒体及时报道的内容。综观中美新闻发展史,灾难新闻报道在新闻报道中占有一定比例。突发灾难纯新闻报道作为一种特定的语篇类型,是一国媒体在新闻专业、媒体定位等方面诸多因素的集中体现,因此对该语类的研究可以帮助我们更好地了解不同媒体的新闻文化。鉴于此,本研究从语类与文化语境的视角对中美两国最具影响力的英文报纸《中国日报》和《纽约时报》2005年至2008年对十七起重大国际空难事件的第一时间新闻报道进行研究,目的是考察该语类的语域特征,探寻其语类结构潜势,分析该语类在两家报纸的表现差异及其原因,进而发现相关的新闻文化特征。

语类与文化密不可分,语类具有很强的文化属性,它是某种文化的特有产物(Fang, 1998)。但是,同一语类也可以存在于不同的文化中,例如,在中西方新闻报道这一大的语类中,都有以突发灾难这种硬新闻为内容的纯新闻报道这一子语类。尽管本文所选

《中国日报》的文字语言为英语,但它却是在中国文化这一大的语境下产生的,因此本文认为该语类具有鲜明的中国文化特征。

语类指交往过程中有目的的、有步骤的、具有一定结构的社会活动(Martin, 2004; Huang, 2004)。Hasan(Halliday & Hasan, 1985)和 Martin(2004; Martin & Rose, 2003, 2005)分别提出了两个相似又不完全相同的语类实现模式。前者提出语境配置决定语类结构成分,从而形成语类结构潜势;而在后者那里,语域配置代替了语境配置,纲要式结构代替了语类结构,其成分由语类“段”及其更小的成分语类“相”构成。可以看出,语类与语境和语域密切相关(Fang, 1998)。

功能语言学的语境层次包括上下文语境、情境语境和文化语境,其中情境语境是其研究的重心。从多功能的角度看,情境语境三变量的配置同语言的三大元功能相对应,语场对应概念功能,语旨对应人际功能,语式对应语篇功能。Halliday 把文化定义为一种语境和一种系统,即一种通过语言来实现的意义潜势系统,这一系统基于不同的语言活动和不同的制度背景之中,因此他提出文化语境具有两个层面:机构和意识形态(Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 49)。

本文所建立的理论框架主要来自于上述功能语言学语类与语境理论。由于新闻报道带有明显的媒体机构运作特征,本文认为其文化语境仍包含上述两个层次。灾难新闻话语的机构语境主要由“新闻取向”来体现,它可以由多种因素构成,但本文主要指向两个方面:新闻传统与媒介功能。意识形态主要指新闻报道中新闻记者或编辑在各自的价值观念或国家利益的影响下所表现出的主观态度。空难新闻报道由于上述两种文化语境的制约在两个媒体中具有一定的语类差异。

在语类分析中,人们一般注重区分不同语类的成分的研究,但很少有人研究在同一语类中不同语篇的不同。事实上,同一语类中语篇的不同成分,即可选成分和重复成分也有较强的交际功能(Zhang et al., 2002),而可选成分的改变是引起某个语类发生千变万化的根源,他们是丰富的文化和社会现象的反映(Fang, 1995)。由此,本文在语类分析的基础上,引入文化语境这一概念并在空难新闻话语中对其界定,目的是在找出中美两国媒体都具

有的空难新闻话语这一语类的共同特征的同时,发现该语类的差异并探寻其深层原因。

对空难新闻话语的语域分析发现,在语场方面,及物系统中的物质过程大量使用以表现灾难发生、灾难影响、人们反应等一系列的行动。在语旨方面,为了表达客观公正,记者一般采用陈述语气以向远距离的读者传达新闻信息,极少使用疑问或祈使句以及情态动词。在语式方面,由于突发新闻报道一般按照新闻信息重要性递减的标准进行,所以传统的叙事性结构已被打破,不再具有明显的衔接手段,其语篇的连贯主要通过语境尤其是语场来支撑。另外随着传播手段的发展,空难新闻话语呈现出“多模式语类”的特点,即大多数的报道都采用了文字和图片两种符号资源,而新闻图片的运用使灾难新闻具有了视觉冲击力,传播效果得以增强。

对空难新闻的结构分析发现,该语类一般由下列成分构成:标题、电头、导语、结果描述、背景介绍、反应展现、记者评论。本文在借鉴 Martin 语类研究术语的基础上,把它们统一称为“新闻段”,而这些“新闻段”又可以由更小的成分即“新闻相”组成,比如结果描述可以包括死伤人员、灾难场景和发现,背景介绍包括灾难背景、文化背景和相同事件,反应展现包括救援工作、官员反应和亲属反应。这三个“新闻段”不能独立出现,它们要通过各自的一个或几个“新闻相”来体现。因此在本文所尝试发现的空难新闻语类结构潜势中,标题、电头、导语、结果描述(死伤人员)和背景介绍(灾难背景)构成了该语类的必要成分,前三个成分顺序固定,后两个成分顺序不定且可以重复出现。除了这五个成分外,其他均为非必要成分或可选成分。考虑到灾难新闻的多模式特征,本文也尝试提出了一个空难新闻的多模式语类结构潜势,除上述新闻文本中的必要和可选成分外,新闻图片只构成空难话语的可选成分。为了与新闻文本中的成分及其功能一致,本文把由这些新闻图片构成的可选成分称为新闻图片/导语、新闻图片/结果描述、新闻图片/背景介绍、新闻图片/反应展现。

尽管中美两家报纸的空难新闻话语具有上述所探讨的共同的语域配置及语类结构特征,但本文同样发现了该语类在两个媒体中的微妙差异,而这些差异正是文化语境所制约的结果。

相对来说,《中国日报》在“新闻段”结果描述和反应展现中投

入了较多的笔墨,而《纽约时报》的背景介绍篇幅较长。在对新闻事件的描述上,前者一般采用总体概括的方法,而后者则更倾向于细节描写。这些特点突出地体现了两国媒体形成的新闻取向。中国新闻媒体把舆论导向作为重要功能,即使对国外灾难的报道也注意人与自然的平衡处理,不会特别突出灾难的负面影响,因此往往更重视数字体现的一般结果和各方的救援及反应。美国新闻媒体把环境监测视其应该发挥的重要功能,同时受到解释性报道传统的影响,在空难报道中较倾向于追溯背景、探究原因、强调冲突、描写细节。

除此之外,本文所发现的最大差异正是空难新闻语类结构潜势中的一个可选成分:文化背景。文化背景是对发生灾难的航空公司或有关国家的情况介绍。从理论上讲,这些信息对突发空难新闻本身来讲并不重要,因此它也就成了空难新闻的非必要成分。但是数据显示,该“新闻相”的信息提供与表达呈现出最大的差异:《纽约时报》比《中国日报》多出约十个百分点,且前者的评价手段使用多于后者。从绝对数字来说,两家报纸在记者评论中都没有提供太多的信息,也就是说,双方的记者都力图避免直接表达自己的观点或态度,然而《纽约时报》却利用文化背景这一可选成分,隐含地表达了主观态度,具有一定的意识形态倾向。总的来说,对突发空难事件的处理,《中国日报》和《纽约时报》仍采用纯新闻报道的写作手法,但后者已略微带有解释性报道的某些特点,如提供大量背景并进行评论。

综上所述,本文通过对中美两家报纸中的空难新闻报道这一语类的研究,不仅发现了其特有的语类结构潜势及其组成成分,同时也揭示了这些成分,尤其是可选成分在新闻信息传播中的作用,这为我们深入了解双方的新闻文化提供了帮助。

Abstract

When society is confronted by risks and people are faced with challenges, news media should take the responsibility to monitor environment, disseminate information and guide public opinion. For the hard news of breaking disaster events, journalists and editors from different countries usually adopt straight reporting technique in which the design of news headline, the arrangement of news lead, the selection of news information and the organization of news story are highly conventionalized. At the same time, however, differences still exist in the journalistic practices of different media in performing media functions through news reporting. Influenced by political, economical and cultural factors, different media may respond differently towards the same disaster event.

Due to their maximum news values such as timeliness, conflict, impact, etc., disaster events always receive close attention from news media and the news about disaster events has occupied an indispensable place in the history of journalism both in China and in the U. S. As a typical genre of news discourse, breaking disaster news reports can reflect a nation's professional and media orientations, and the study of this genre can help readers better understand different journalistic cultures. Therefore, the present paper conducts a research on thirty-four straight news reports published in the two influential newspapers of *China*

Daily and *The New York Times* about seventeen air crashes that occurred from the year of 2005 to 2008. The study is mainly underpinned by the theoretical modal of language and context in systemic functional linguistics with the aim of discovering the differences of news cultures in the two newspapers by investigating the register configuration features and the generic structure potential of this genre and inquiring into its variations.

Genre is inseparable from culture since it is a cultural product (Fang, 1998). But a certain genre can also be found in different cultures. For instance, the genre of news report and its sub-genre like straight news report for hard news of breaking disasters both frequently appear in the international journalistic field. Though *China Daily* is published in the language of English, it is produced in China and therefore bears the features of Chinese culture.

Genre refers to a staged goal-oriented social activity in human communication (Martin, 2004; Huang, 2004). Two modals of genre realization have been respectively proposed by Hasan (Halliday & Hasan, 1985) and Martin (2004; Martin & Rose, 2003, 2005). For Hasan, contextual configuration determines generic structural elements and helps to form a generic structure potential, while for Martin, register configuration is used for contextual configuration and generic structure is substituted by schematic structure whose composition units are named as “stage” and “phase.” So, genre, context and register are closely related to each other (Fang, 1998).

In systemic functional linguistics, context can be classified into three types: context of co-text, context of situation and context of culture, among which context of situation is the focus of its study. From the perspective of functions, the three variables of context of situation are interrelated with the three meta-functions: field with ideational function, tenor with interpersonal function and mode with textual function. Culture is defined by

Halliday as a context, a meaning potential system that is realized by language and that is based on different linguistic activities and different institutional backgrounds, so context of culture has two dimensions: institution and ideology (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p.49).

The theoretical framework for the present study is established on the base of the above theory about genre and context. Context of culture is still discussed from two dimensions, institution and ideology, but for news reporting, institution can be realized by journalistic orientations such as journalistic traditions and media functions while ideology can be realized by subjective attitudes constrained by social values and national interests in order to build a specific image for what is being reported. These culture contexts will lead to genre differences of air disaster news discourses in the two newspapers.

In genre analysis, researchers usually pay more attention to the study of different elements in different genres while ignoring the study of different elements of the same genre, however, the different elements, especially the optional elements and recursive elements in the same genre have very important communicative functions (Zhang et al. , 2002). The change of optional elements can just bring about the change of the genre which is the direct reflection of different social and cultural systems (Fang, 1995). In view of these facts, the present study focuses on the genre analysis of air disaster news discourse by introducing the concept of context of culture, with the purpose of finding out the similarities as well as the differences of the same genre and digging out the root causes from the two cultures.

It is discovered by register analysis that the field of air disaster news discourse is realized by heavy use of material process in the system of transitivity which intends to exhibit series of activities such as how the crash occurred, how it caused influence, and how people reacted to it. The tenor of air disaster news

discourse is achieved by a larger proportion of declaratives and reported speeches with very few modal resources used because journalists for such straight news reports are supposed to build an objective and impartial interpersonal relationship with readers in a far distance. As the breaking news report is always unfolded according to the importance of information rather than the chronological narrative order, air disaster news discourse is manifested as apparent lack of cohesive devices and its textual coherence is mostly sustained by the field. Besides, air disaster news discourse in press has been presented as a multimodal genre since most of the reports in the data have adopted two semiotic resources, the linguistic and the photographic which enhance the communicative effect.

The generic structural analysis makes it clear that air disaster news discourse generally consists of the following seven structural elements: *Headline*, *Dateline*, *Lead*, *Consequence Description*, *Background Introduction*, *Reaction Presentation* and *Journalist's Judgment*. Following Martin, the present study terms these larger units as "news stages" which can be further classified into smaller units as "news phases." For instance, the stage of *Consequence Description* has phases like *casualties*, *disaster scene*, and *findings*; *Background Introduction* has *circumstances*, *cultural background* and *similar events*; *Reaction Presentation* has *rescue work*, *officials' response* and *relatives' response*. These three stages can not occur independently and they must be realized by at least one phase. As a result, the generic structure potential for the air disaster news discourse discovered by the author includes five obligatory elements: *Headline*, *Dateline*, *Lead*, *Consequence Description* (*casualties*), and *Background Introduction* (*circumstances*). The first three elements are in fixed order and the latter two are unfixed and can be recursive after the first three. All the other stages or phases are optional. Considering the multimodality of air disaster news

discourse, the present study has also tentatively proposed a multimodal generic structure potential. It is observed that news photographs in air disaster news reports are only optional. In order to express the same function as in the news text, the optional elements formed by news photographs are labeled as *News Photograph/Lead*, *News Photograph/Consequence Description*, *News Photograph/Background Introduction*, and *News photograph/Reaction Presentation*.

Although the two newspapers have demonstrated obvious similarities as far as the register and generic structure are concerned, subtle differences are still detected, which are mainly caused by different contexts of culture.

Comparatively speaking, *China Daily* devotes a bit more space to the stages of *Consequence Description* and *Reaction Presentation* whereas *The New York Times* sheds more ink in *Background Introduction*. As to the descriptive techniques, the former newspaper usually uses generalized statement while the latter one is inclined to provide detailed depiction. These features can be attributed to the two different journalistic orientations. In China, the media function of leading public opinion has always been the important one, and even in the news reports about foreign accidents, balance between man and nature is also maintained without too much emphasis on the negative side of disasters. This leads to more general results and rescue work reactions in its reports. On the contrary, for American news media, environmental surveillance is regarded as a very important function. Therefore, in their air disaster news reports, detailed description is more often used to emphasize conflict between human and nature, and more background is provided so as to help look for causes. This tendency is also partly influenced by the interpretative reporting tradition in America.

The biggest difference found out by the present study just lies in the optional element: the phase of *cultural background* in

the stage of *Background Introduction*. Theoretically speaking, *cultural background* about the aviation company or the related country is not very important to the breaking event, so it is not an essential part of air disaster news report and it only functions as an optional element. However, statistics show that the amount of information given for this phase in *The New York Times* is about ten percent higher than that in *China Daily*, showing the biggest difference among all the stages or phases. Apart from this, the appraisal resources in this phase have been detected to be more frequently used in the former newspaper than the latter one. Seen from absolute numbers, neither of the two newspapers has provided much information for the stage of *Journalist's Judgment*, because reporters have a clear understanding of objectivity principle for such straight news reports and try to avoid expressing their personal opinion directly. Thus, the optional element of *cultural background* is ingeniously used by the reporters of *The New York Times* to implicitly convey their attitudes with ideological slants. Generally speaking, both the two newspapers have adopted in essence the straight or objective writing technique for the breaking air disaster news, but through providing a large amount of background information permeated with reporters' comments, the reports in *The New York Times* have slightly taken on some features of interpretative style.

The study is significant because it not only proposes a formula of generic structure potential for the genre of air disaster news discourse for the first time, but also reveals how the change of generic elements, especially that of optional elements in such a genre influences communicative effect. Undoubtedly the study will help readers to gain better understanding of news culture embodied in the two different newspapers.

目 录

致谢	i
摘要	iii
英文摘要	vii
第一章 导论.....	1
1.1 研究背景	3
1.2 研究目的与研究意义	5
1.3 关键词	7
1.4 本书结构.....	10
第二章 文献综述	12
2.1 简介.....	14
2.2 关于新闻的关键概念.....	14
2.3 国内外新闻研究综述.....	20
2.4 对以往研究的评价.....	34
2.5 小结.....	42
第三章 理论基础、理论框架和研究方法.....	44
3.1 简介.....	46
3.2 语类理论.....	46
3.3 语境理论.....	52
3.4 本研究理论框架.....	60
3.5 研究方法.....	68

3.6 小结	76
第四章 空难新闻话语的语域配置	77
4.1 简介	79
4.2 语类与语域	79
4.3 空难新闻话语的语场分析	83
4.4 空难新闻话语的语旨分析	96
4.5 空难新闻话语的语式分析	112
4.6 小结	120
第五章 空难新闻话语的语类结构潜势	123
5.1 简介	125
5.2 语类与语类分析	125
5.3 空难新闻话语中新闻段和新闻相的界定	136
5.4 空难新闻话语的语类结构潜势分析	150
5.5 小结	171
第六章 空难新闻话语中的新闻取向	175
6.1 简介	175
6.2 文化语境与机构	176
6.3 空难新闻话语的信息分布	185
6.4 空难新闻话语的信息清晰度	205
6.5 新闻图片中的信息表达	224
6.6 小结	225
第七章 空难新闻话语中的态度	228
7.1 简介	230
7.2 文化语境与意识形态	231
7.3 空难新闻话语新闻段和新闻相中的态度	236
7.4 空难新闻话语话题结构中的态度	258
7.5 空难新闻话语图片中的态度	265