THE IMPLICITNESS CONSTRUCTED AND TRANSLATED IN DIPLOMATIC DISCOURSE: A PERSPECTIVE FROM GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation addresses the issue of implicitness and its translation in diplomatic discourse (DD). It takes the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs web coverage, in both Chinese and English, of the 2001 Hainan Air-Collision Incident as the case corpus.\(^1\) The case study argues that Grammatical Metaphor (GM) can be supplemented by findings about Conceptual Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics as a major implicitness-creating mechanism. Zhu’s (1996a) threefold analytical framework SOM (Structure of Meaning) is modified for a descriptive and explanatory study of translational treatment of the implicitness.

Implicitness can be a prominent feature of the DD produced in conflict-resolution scenarios. It is employed for covering up information not sharable to the public out of national interest concerns in DD and its translation. The implicitness can be regarded as being motivated by interpersonal considerations oriented to the desired responses of the public.

Previous research has classified linguistic representations of implicitness mainly as lexical phenomena, i.e. ambiguity, vagueness, fuzziness, and generality. Lexis and grammar form the two ends of a dynamic lexicogrammatical continuum, where there is a mutual movement between them, responding to the actual needs of communication. These needs at times would cause the tension between discourse semantics and the lexicogrammar in a language. As a solution to the tension, GM emerges at the lexicogrammatical level and out

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\(^1\) As I will explain in Chapter Five, the “two very sorry’s” letter and its translated Chinese versions are included in the corpus for the significant role the construction and the translations of the letter have played.
of the need of discourse semantics. Implicitness can be a result of this semantic extension. Loss (or concealment) of information occurs when a “congruent” coding is packaged into a GM, in which the syntactic concealment of the human element is largely responsible for the implicitness at issue. The semantic duality and the condensation of information into more compact linguistic realization units in a GM are thus instrumental in creating implicitness.

Two factors make the blending of some findings in Cognitive Linguistics into the GM theory necessary. Firstly, Cognitive Linguistics lends some working judging criteria of congruence to the GM theory. Secondly, both Conceptual Metaphor theory and GM theory look at metaphor from above, as a chosen linguistic form representing underlying possible multiple meanings. It is hypothesized that lexical choice comes before grammatical configuring in constructing the linguistic form of an intended message. It is argued that the blending can better explain the conceptual factors in word choices and transitivity selections in clause building and information presenting for creating implicitness.

With reference to a collection of contextual data, the dissertation studies the deployment of GMs in the data and examines in particular how the translated versions play up certain elements “packaged” in the original while down-toning others in relation to the different diplomatic goals the Chinese government pursued. These comparisons are conducted against disclosed intentions of the discourse producers. It is found that: 1) Demarcation between ST and TT of the DD is blurred. 2) Lexical choices in each translation are consistent with and complemented by the use of GMs. 3) The syntactic concealment of the human element plays a key role in the making of Ideational GMs. 4) The Explicitation Hypothesis does not appear to be universal in translation.
It is contended that the translation of the DD featured with implicitness is invested with a prominent interpersonal concern for maintaining international engagement, even at the expense of the ideational content. Such a concern is textually accountable in the framework of GM with each text in question viewed as an SOM.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>Current Attention Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM</td>
<td>Conceptual Metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD</td>
<td>Diplomatic discourse</td>
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<td>GM</td>
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<td>SFL</td>
<td>Systemic Functional Linguistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOM</td>
<td>Structure of Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Source Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Target Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VL</td>
<td>Vague Language</td>
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