



RESEARCH ARTICLE



LANGUAGE FEATURES OF NEWS REPORTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REGISTER THEORY

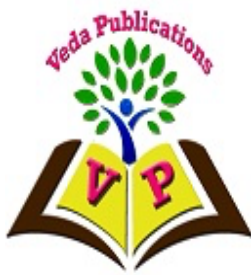
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ABSTRACT



Register theory focuses on the relationship between language and social context, exploring how language varies according to different settings, participants, and purposes. News reports, being a form of media communication, are tailored to convey information efficiently and effectively to the reader. The language used in news reports is often formal, objective, and precise, reflecting the serious and authoritative nature of the content. This article establishes the "Register Analysis Model" to explore language features of English news discourses and to propose translation principles and methods, while ensuring research through quantitative and qualitative analysis.

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1. Introduction

Register theory is one of the important theories of systemic functional grammar, which refers to the language we use changing with the context. In order to adapt to different communication needs, our discourse has emerged with many different variants, and the categories formed by these variants become registers. As Halliday (1978) has proposed that register is a very important and applicable concept in language communication. It is a synthesis of the overall characteristics of language in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure, rhetoric, and structure that is suitable for different communication situations. The basic function of register theory is to predict discourse structure; The basic purpose of register analysis is to reveal language variants; and its general principle is to discover what factors determine what language features. Understanding the register of a particular communication helps us to interpret and understand the message effectively.

News report, an important medium for gathering information, has long been a focus of attention due to its authenticity and timeliness. News language is also known as a language that reflects social and cultural development and progress due to its uniqueness, novelty, and creativity. Therefore, how to effectively interpret news discourse has always been a focus of research by many linguists at home and abroad. News discourse analysis should not only stay at the lexical and grammatical levels, but also reflect on the semantic, contextual, stylistic features of the text, and cognitive levels.

Over the years, register theory has been increasingly applied in the fields of in stylistic analysis,

sociolinguistics, language teaching, and translation research. However, the application of register analysis in news discourse analysis, whether it is a matter of theoretical relevance or specific application, is rarely discussed. This deficiency is closely related to the complexity of news discourse analysis itself, and on the other hand, it is due to the urgent need for continuous improvement and development of the register theory proposed by Halliday and others. In view of this, this article will explore the application of register in news discourse and further demonstrate the practical guiding significance of register theory for news translation.

2. REGISTER ANALYSIS MODEL

Register is a component of the sociolinguistic system, whose highest level is social reality, which contains a semantic structure through which the language system obtains meaning from social reality. The theory was developed by Michael Halliday, who viewed language as varying according to its function. He posited that different situations require different languages, and these variations in language use are referred to as "registers." Halliday identified three main variables in register theory: field, tenor, and mode.

Field is actually what happens in a specific environment. What we usually say will change with what we do. In different situations, we will choose different vocabulary and grammatical structures to organize our language and express different meanings. So the meaning we want to express is also part of what we need to do. Language field refers to the actual events that occur during the communication process, as well as the activities that



participants engage in, the topic of the conversation, that is, the content of the conversation or the specific topic discussed in a specific context. For example, if the language field is about English learning, then regardless of whether we were attending English classes, dining, or taking a walk at that time, what we were talking about was about English learning rather than food or sports. Therefore, language field is actually what participants truly do or say in specific situations. For example, if a language field is a buying and selling transaction, even if the participants talk about weather, politics, or economics, then the language field is still a buying and selling transaction, not a weather, politics, or economics.

Tenor refers to the participants and their relationships in the communication process. In the process of communication, due to different participants, as well as their nature, social status, and roles, they will use different language, or in other words, different levels of formality, to achieve the communication process; Different language styles are used for communication between teachers and students, father and son, doctors and patients, salespersons and customers, ordinary acquaintances and close friends, etc. Generally speaking, the closer the relationship, the lower the formal level of communication among participants; The further the relationship between participants, the higher the formality of the language used. When topic participants engage in communication, they will consciously construct their own language, search for appropriate words, and find the most expressive sentence structures and orders to express emotions and convey information based on their social status, communication purposes, attitudes, and methods.

Mode refers to the role that language plays in communication, including communication channels and rhetorical devices. In actual communication, in different situations or when discussing different topics, we speak with different styles of language, such as using instructional language when teachers teach to students; When news is broadcast, the announcer uses news language; Advertisers use advertising language when advertising; In humorous skits, the performers use humorous and humorous spoken language. Modality is actually about the question of what role discourse plays in a specific environment and what channels are used in language communication. The language patterns are mainly divided into written language and spoken language, and within these two categories, they can also be further divided. According to different communicative purposes, discourse can be divided into persuasive, comforting, and inflammatory explanatory. According to different communication channels and media, languages can also be divided into written and oral forms. Written forms can be further divided into those intended for oneself or others, as well as those used for speech writing or movie subtitles. The advertising language and variety show language in oral language are different; For example, the oral language of commentators on the football field and the language of science popularization programs explaining football knowledge are also different. The former only explains football matches, while the latter is to explain science popularization knowledge about football

The three variables of field, mode, and tenor describe the three characteristics of a language



communication environment, which together determine the language choice of this communication environment, which is what we call the register. These three parameters tend to determine the three parts of the semantic system of language, namely the three metafunctions/meanings of language as mentioned by Halliday: conceptual function/meaning, interpersonal function/meaning, and discourse function/meaning, and are expressed through their formal structural components in language. Any change in contextual elements will cause a change in the meaning of the communication, leading to language variation and the emergence of different language registers. Specifically, the discourse field stimulates conceptual meaning, the tenor guides interpersonal meaning, and the discourse pattern stimulates discourse meaning.

Based on the register theory, this article establishes the "register analysis model" to analyze the unique stylistic features of news discourse. As the three parameters, namely field, tenor, and mode, respectively constrain the conceptual function, interpersonal function, and textual function of language, this analytical model summarizes their corresponding discourse functions while analyzing the three parameters from lexical, syntactical and textual level. The purpose of quantitative analysis of the functions of the text is to obtain the characteristics of the transitivity system, modality system, and theme-rheme system of the news text. Next by using contrastive analysis as a method, point out the differences between English and Chinese the similarities and differences in news discourse, and analyze the reasons for these differences from the

perspective of register, thus techniques and strategies in news translation are proposed.

3. THREE PARAMETERS IN NEWS REPORT

News reporting typically employs a formal, objective, and direct register, avoiding colloquialisms or informal language. This register is chosen to maintain the credibility and authority of the news outlet and to ensure that the information is communicated clearly and efficiently. By applying register theory to news English reporting, we can gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic mechanisms that underlie effective news communication. This understanding can help us appreciate the precision and objectivity of news language, as well as the ways in which reporters manipulate language to convey specific messages and effects on their readers.

The field of discourse refers to the subject matter or the topic being discussed. In news reporting, the field is typically centered around events that have occurred or are currently happening, affecting a specific community, region, or the world at large. The field determines the vocabulary, terminology, and even the tone of the report. For instance, a news article on a political summit would use terminology related to diplomacy, treaties, and international relations. The tenor of discourse is concerned with the social relations between the writer and the reader, as well as the writer's attitude towards the subject matter. In news reporting, the tenor is often formal and objective, reflecting the journalistic ideal of neutrality. However, even within this constraint, subtle shifts in tone can convey different meanings. For instance, the use of active versus passive voice can imply a degree of



responsibility or agency. The mode of discourse deals with the form and structure of the language used. In news reporting, the mode is typically written and follows a specific genre or structure that is recognized by readers as "news." This includes elements like headlines, introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions. The language used is often concise, direct, and to the point. The register of news reporting is composed of three different levels. These registers have common characteristics in semantic structure to represent the characteristics of English news reporting, while also having their own characteristics to represent the characteristics that differ from other levels of registers. The three elements of the register of news reporting work together to form the functional variant of news reporting, and determine the selection of conceptual meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning in the news reporting discourse. The meaning potential of language is realized through lexical-grammatical selection into lexical items and syntactic structures, thus ultimately realizing the behavioral potential and realizing various functions of the language in the news reporting discourse. In addition, as a functional variant of written form, newspaper news reporting also achieves its meaning potential through selection at the discourse level, syntactical level and word level.

The lexical characteristics of news reports are also determined by the basic functions of news reporting, and are the result of reflecting its meaning characteristics. Because news reporting requires expressing as many meaning characteristics as possible with minimal formal features, while also requiring freshness and attracting readers' interest,

the vocabulary of news reports requires being as concise and novel as possible. Due to the fact that many existing words cannot meet this requirement, it is necessary to create simple new words or new expressions in news reports, or choose short existing words and give them new meanings. Such words have a high repetition rate in news reports and gradually become journalistic English. This type of vocabulary includes: a short and trendy journalistic word, which is called midget word, such as cut in Big Cuts in School Budget; back in Unions Back Peace Move, ban in, Bus Ban on Pupils After Attack on Crew; a newly created word, such as taikonauts in "Chinese taikonauts (中国太空人) Liu Boming, Zhaizhigang and Jing Haipeng wave to well-wishers before the launch of China's third manned space mission". After Shenzhou VII craft launched, the word "taikonaut" which means a space traveler was frequently mentioned in media reports around the world. It appears in dictionaries, too; and neologism, many terminologies in different fields are absorbed into news, which are given specific meanings to describe things, such as flagship in "The single most striking change has been the official recognition that the flagship (旗舰) of the third term, the poll tax, was an error." means cardinal task.

The syntactic features of news reports meet the goal of conveying the most information with the least amount of space, which is, sentences are long and the structure is complex, the sentence pattern is highly expanded, and the structure is very rigorous. In terms of syntax, it has the following characteristics: (1) prepositional modification is highly concentrated, usually from phrases or clauses to prepositional modifiers. (2) The widespread use of elliptical



sentence structures. Omission is another method of saving space and tightening structure, which is particularly useful for news reporting. 3) Use a large amount of direct quotations. To enhance the credibility of the report, authors usually quote speakers' words directly as factual evidence. In this case, the direct quotation is often more important than who spoke, so the speech process is usually placed after the direct quotation, or inserted into the direct quotation, sometimes using inversion. At the same time, quoting a large number of direct quotations can also enhance the vividness of the text.

The prominent structural feature of news report discourse is its three-part structure, namely headline, lead and main body. The function of news reporting is to ensure the new information is passed on to the reader in the fastest way. Due to different time and needs, most readers read news selectively. For messages that are not of interest, only the title is read; for those that are of interest, they try to pursue the details. In order to meet the needs of readers, news reports always put important information in the first place. News reports often start with a headline, conveying the core content and information of the text to attract readers. The lead can be seen as a further explanation of the title on the one hand, and as a focus on explaining who, when, where, and how. A lead may include six parts: location, character, matter, method, time, and reason. The semantic structure of the main body of news reports is: first highlighting the key points, and then providing specific narration, description, explanation, or discussion.

4. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF REGISTER AND THE PRACTICE OF TRANSLATION

Disasters are events closely related to human survival, and no matter what country or social system, it is difficult to avoid the occurrence of disasters. Therefore, news reports related to disasters have always been a hot topic of social concern and an important subject in news communication. In this section, we will compare and analyze the differences in three parameters between Chinese and English disaster news reports using a register model, and summarize some stylistic features of Chinese and English disaster news reports, with a view to providing reference suggestions for the translation.

We conducted a quantitative analysis of dozens of bilingual disaster news articles on the China Radio International website in recent years and find that Chinese news discourse is basically consistent with English discourse, but the degree of complete equivalence between source language and target language is not very high. From the first element of register, the topic of communication is disaster, and there are certain differences in the degree of attention between China and the West. Western media have a higher interest in disaster. From the perspective of language purpose, the communicators of English and Chinese discourse have differences in social background, thinking mode, and cultural basis. From the perspective of language style, there are essential differences between Chinese and English in the mode of organization. Therefore, it is normal for different phenomena to occur in English and Chinese discourse during the process of register analysis. Let's analyze and compare the following two pieces of disaster news:



中新网 5 月 13 日电 据路透社消息，当地时间 13 日，印度尼西亚当局表示，11 日晚的暴雨在苏门答腊岛多地引发山洪，并导致滑坡和熔岩流等次生灾害，目前已导致 37 人遇难，另有 17 人失踪，约 200 座房屋受损。

报道称，当地救援人员表示，熔岩流是火山灰、岩石碎片和泥浆的混合物，2023 年 12 月，苏门答腊最活跃火山之一的马拉皮火山多次喷发，近日的大雨将火山灰和大块岩石等物质从火山上冲下。

消息称，救援工作仍在紧张进行中，现场已部署了超过 400 名救援和军警等人员，但因道路受损使得救援工作变得异常复杂。

(KPL/VNA) At least 28 people have been reportedly killed and four others gone missing in floods and landslides triggered by heavy rain in West Sumatra province of Indonesia on late May 11.

Abdul Malik, chief of the provincial rescue team, confirmed that 28 people have been killed, and efforts are underway to search for four others who are missing.

The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) said in a statement that flooding since May 11 night brought mud to the Tanah Datar regency, affecting five sub-districts.

BNPB said its latest assessment shows 84 housing units and 16 bridges have been affected by the disaster, adding that heavy equipment were deployed to speed up the clearing of road access.

Indonesia is prone to landslides and floods during the rainy season.

In March, at least 26 people were found dead after landslides and floods hit West Sumatra.

Firstly, both Chinese and English disaster news reports aim to inform the public about the occurrence of disasters, the impact they have caused, and the efforts made by relevant authorities to respond and provide relief. They both serve as an important source of information for the public to understand the situation and make decisions. Secondly, both Chinese and English disaster news reports emphasize the importance of timeliness and accuracy. They strive to provide the latest updates on the disaster situation, ensuring that the information they convey is reliable and credible. However, when analyzed the three parameters of register, we can also see the differences. Firstly, from the perspective of reporting focus, Chinese disaster news reports tend to place more emphasis on the overall situation and collective efforts, highlighting the role of the government and society in disaster relief. They often present a unified and cohesive narrative, emphasizing the resilience and solidarity of the people. On the other hand, English disaster news reports may tend to focus more on individual stories and personal experiences, highlighting the impact of the disaster on specific individuals or communities. They may provide more detailed accounts of individual suffering and heroism. Secondly, in terms of language style and tone, Chinese disaster news reports tend to adopt a more serious and solemn tone, reflecting the gravity and seriousness of the situation. They often use formal and objective language to convey information. By contrast, English disaster news reports may adopt a more direct and emotional style, aiming to engage and resonate with



the audience. They may use more descriptive and emotional language to convey the impact and feelings associated with the disaster. Lastly, cultural differences also play a role in shaping the reporting styles of Chinese and English disaster news. Chinese culture values collectivism and harmony, which may influence the emphasis on collective efforts and unity in disaster news reports. Western cultures, on the other hand, may value individualism and personal freedoms, leading to a focus on individual stories and experiences in disaster news coverage.

In conclusion, while Chinese and English disaster news reports share the common goal of informing the public about disasters, they differ in their reporting focus, language style, and cultural orientations. These differences reflect the unique characteristics and values of the respective cultures and languages. Translators of news reports should be aware of these differences and make appropriate adaptations to ensure that the translated text is culturally appropriate and relevant to the target audience.

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