The Analysis of Two Travel Narratives from Textbooks

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Abstract: Through the Transitivity framework, the similarities and differences of schematic structure, the content and stylish choices, as well as the ideology imbedded in the two travel narratives has been investigated to explore genre application in second language teaching and learning.

1. Introduction

To explore genre application in second language teaching and learning, two reading passages from textbooks of similar difficulty and target readers (high school level) are selected. The two texts are of the same genre of travel narrative. Travel narrative can be seen as a special interpretive device through which people represent their identity by travelling. Text 1 of 552 words is named "A Trip on 'The True North,'" which is selected from a textbook in Mainland China (Liu, 2007). Text 2 of 542 words named "The Silent Village" is selected from New Concept English (Alexander, 1973), by British publishing house Longman.

2. Methodology

The analysis of the two texts will be explored by Transitivity framework, a proper tool to unveil the similarities and differences of schematic structure, the content and stylish choices, as well as the ideology imbedded in the two texts of the same genre through the questions of how is the genre features of travel narrative reflected in the two texts and what are other similarities and differences of the two texts.
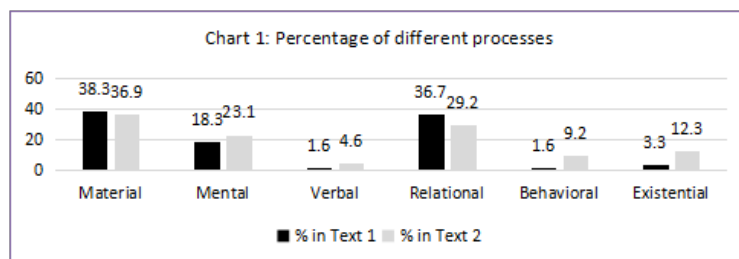
3. Analysis

The analysis was done through investigating the overall seminaries between the two texts and their differences respectively through Material, Relational and Mental processes.

3.1 The Overall Similarities

Text 1 owns 60 process verbs and Text 2, 65. By closely looking into the percentage of different process types within each text, the overall pattern appears from Chart 1 showing that there are more Material, Mental and Relational process types within both texts. Both writers use Material to describe people's actions, Mental to present what people see and think, and relational to introduce new places and define new relationships. For the genre of travel narrative, the high frequency of

Material, Mental and Relational process types is the feature in common and the investigation will go into these three most frequently adopted processes and their related participants and circumstances.

Chart 1: Percentage of different processes

Process	% in Text 1	% in Text 2
Material	38.3	36.9
Mental	18.3	23.1
Verbal	1.6	4.6
Relational	36.7	29.2
Behavioral	1.6	9.2
Existential	3.3	12.3

3.2 Active Projecting of Characters through Material Process

One of the functions of Transitivity is to help unveil whether characters in the text are powerful and active (Halliday, 1967). Material process, due to its strong action indication, is the effective process type to detect the power relation (active or passive) of different participants. The two texts both possess low frequency of putting the Goal before the Actor, suggesting that both writers place the characters in active status.

This unique feature of the two texts could be explained by the fact that they are both passages from textbooks that target teenagers and consequently they bear certain subtext of educational functions or ideologies for juveniles, a feature commonly seen in textbook from Taiwan and Mainland China (Xiong, & Qian, 2012; Ke, 2012). Text 1 follows this ideology by avoiding the passive positioning in Material process to support the two Chinese cousins' active projecting. It could be for the purpose of perfecting the cousins' active, powerful and responsible image while depicting their traveling in the foreign country Canada. Text 2 does not have this "image" or "pride" concern for it describes a casual trip to the countryside of a couple with no evident account of their nationality, but despite the thrilling adventure the characters experience and the narrative of their negative emotions, the characters remains generally active to suggest the strong hold of the ground.

## 3.3 Introduction of New Occurrences through Relational Process

Adopting attributive and identifying processes to introduce new experiences or objects along the journey is a shared characteristic demonstrated by the analysis of the Relational process, as shown in Chart 2. The attributive process facilitates the description of the new experiences happening during the journey. The identifying process helps identify the new occurrences along the trip. They both serve the function of introduction and fit into the categorical features of the genre of travel narrative where new occurrences keep jumping out to attract the readers' interest and grab their attention.

Chart 2: Relational process

	Text 1	Text 2
All	22	19
attributive	11	13
identifying	8	4
possessing	3	2
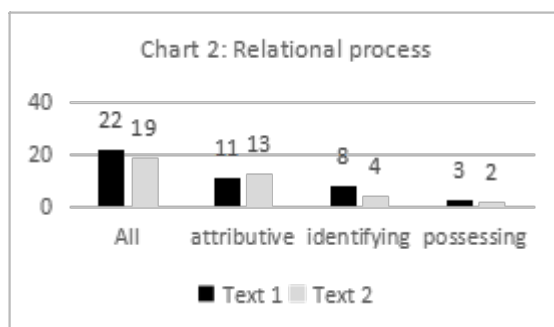
The difference lie in that Text 2 tends to attribute more and identify less while Text 1 has a less unbalanced proportion between the two processes. The different narration style may account for the distinction. Characters in Text 1 go to more new destination and experiences more new events. The writer has to frequently identify new things and occurrences and could only glimpse over each matter hurriedly so that the writer attributes less but identifies more. By contrast, in Text 2, the characters are mainly involved in one incidence in one area. The writer does not need to constantly identify new occurrences such as places and scenery to the reader, and therefore, the writer could do detailed description by assigning more attributives to the carriers.

3.4 Seeking Implicit Influence through Mental Process

The writers subtly exert the power of language to implicitly influence the reader with Mental process that describes what the characters see or think. Both writers try to gain the reader's recognition of their stance or ideology via the character's perspectives or thoughts. To achieve this goal, they adopt a clear-cut pattern of assigning one sensor with one mental process and one phenomenon. The number of the mental, sensor and phenomenon does not show significant distinction in Chart 3. It can be viewed as a common pattern of the travel narrative genre. The succinct structure helps avoid imposing cognitive load on the reader, allowing the reader to understand more easily.

Chart 3: Mental process

	mental	sensor	phenomenon
Text 1	11	11	14
Text 2	15	14	14
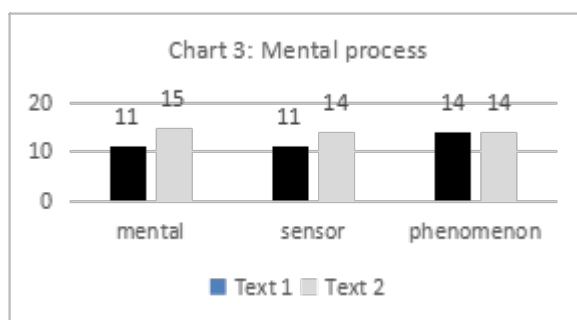
Different from the diverse sentence subjects in the relational process, the sensors of both texts are very monotonous. It indicates that different from the introduction of new matters along the journey, neither of the writers involve more than two main characters to distract the readers' attention on the scenery or the intriguing plot. The phenomenon, however, are alarmingly long and complex in both texts. Of the 14 phenomena in each text, 64.3% in Text 1 and 71.4% in Text 2 are clauses. Unlike argumentative genre, it is hard for the writer to explicitly insert their stance and ideology in the travel narratives, and therefore, the prolonged phenomenon bearing the writers' interpretation of the scenery are actually the hidden extension of the writer's ideologies and stances. The carefully elaborated extension of the phenomenon reflects the writer's intention of making the reader resonate with the writer through the ideas and perspectives of the characters in the text.

4. Conclusion

The research question of how the genre features of travel narrative are reflected in the two texts as well as their similarities and differences has been answered from the perspective of the active projecting of characters through Material process, the introduction of new occurrences through Relational process and the seeking for implicit influence through Mental process through Transitivity analysis.

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