

Positive Discourse Analysis of News Discourse about Hangzhou Asian Games from the Perspective of Attitude of Appraisal Theory

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Abstract: This study employs Martin's Appraisal Theory as the theoretical framework, combining it with Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), to examine the news discourse of the Hangzhou Asian Games in China Daily. Appraisal Theory, developed within systemic functional linguistics, comprises three interrelated subsystems: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Specifically, the Attitude subsystem is further divided into Affect (emotional reactions), Judgment (ethical evaluations), and Appreciation (aesthetic or functional assessments). By focusing on positive Attitude resources in the selected corpus, this research aims to reveal how media discursively construct harmonious interactions and positive social values. Different from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which emphasizes power critique and ideological deconstruction, PDA proposed by Martin in 1999 shifts the focus to "good news" discourse that promotes social harmony. This paper argues that through lexical choices in Affect (e.g., "enthusiasm"), Judgment (e.g., "perseverance"), and Appreciation (e.g., "grand"), the news discourse constructs China's responsible image as a host, highlights the cultural and sports value of the Games, and fosters regional unity. The analysis demonstrates that positive Attitude resources not only enhance reader identification but also reflect China's commitment to sustainable development and cultural exchanges, thus providing a linguistic model for positive globalization communication.

1. Introduction

The Hangzhou Asian Games is one of the largest comprehensive games in Asia. It is not only a sports event, but also an important platform for cultural exchanges and friendship among Asian countries. Holding the Hangzhou Asian Games is of great significance to promoting the development of Asian sports, promoting regional cooperation and exchanges, and showcasing the charm of Chinese culture and development achievements. This paper will take a news report on the Hangzhou Asian Games in China Daily as the research object, and from the perspective of evaluation theory, investigate the use of attitude resources in the report and the meaning of the

discourse conveyed, in an attempt to explore how discourse successfully achieves positive interaction between the author and the reader.

2. Theoretical Framework

Contemporary linguistic investigation categorizes discourse studies into adversarial and constructive analytical paradigms. The critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, originating from British linguist Roger Fowler's seminal work *Language and Control* (1979), examines linguistic patterns through adversarial lenses of critique, disclosure, and negation to expose the interplay between communicative practices, sociopolitical influence, and institutional belief systems, with its primary objective being the eradication of systemic inequities and dissolution of entrenched societal structures[1]. Nevertheless, CDA's adversarial orientation presents substantial limitations: its confrontational paradigm for social actualization, absence of constructive ameliorative frameworks[2], and disproportionate focus on deconstructive methodologies potentially undermine societal equilibrium rather than fostering collaborative progress. Therefore, positive discourse analysis comes into being to make up for the shortcomings of critical discourse analysis [3]. Professor Martin from the University of Sydney in Australia proposed the concept of positive discourse analysis in 1999. Martin believes that discourse analysis should not be limited to the "bad news" that contains inequality, but also the "good news" that advocates harmony and equality [4]. Domestic scholar Zhu Yongsheng also discussed the relationship between positive discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis in detail [5], arguing that positive discourse analysis is not a simple denial of critical discourse analysis, but a supplement and further development of the former discourse analysis methods.

The Appraisal framework constitutes a linguistic architecture derived from systemic-functional grammar, designed to investigate intersubjective signification within communicative exchanges. Serving as the conceptual foundation for affirmative discourse examination, this paradigm comprises three interdependent mechanisms: the affective positioning matrix, dialogic negotiation apparatus, and scalar modulation system[6]. The affective subsystem further incorporates tripartite dimensions – emotive responses, evaluative assessments, and ethical determinations – respectively encoding psychological states, moral conduct appraisals, and object valuation. All constituent mechanisms manifest bipolar (affirmative/negatory) and bimodal (direct/indirect) operational modalities. This investigation conducts lexico-semantic scrutiny of affective resources within China Daily's Hangzhou Asian Games reportage, interrogating strategic deployment of evaluative lexis and elucidating the constructive sociodiscursive implications thereby conveyed.

3. Discourse Analysis

This paper takes the news text about the "Hangzhou Asian Games" in China Daily as the data analysis object, sorts it according to relevance, and selects the most relevant article (it is named "*Hangzhou Games :showcase for the Asian Spirit*") as the research object [7]. This article, written by the commentary department of China Daily, expresses many attitudes and opinions about the event or the behavior of others, and has further analytical significance. This paper will analyze this article through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

3.1 Emotional system

The Emotional system, also known as the Affect system, refers to the language resources that express the speaker or writer's emotions, feelings, and psychological states. It involves the expression of emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and desire. This system can be used

to reveal the speaker or writer's attitude towards the evaluated object, and can be divided into positive and negative emotions. Language users will choose different linguistic means when expressing their attitudes.[8] As the text uses many active words to express the author's affirmation of the Hangzhou Asian Games and the expectation of its positive impact. The following are some examples.

Example 1

The opening ceremony of the Hangzhou Asian Games was wonderful and showcased the depth of Chinese culture and history to the world.

The word “wonderful here, as an explicit attitude resource, directly expresses the author's emotional attitude towards the opening ceremony of the Asian Games and conveys a positive discourse meaning. It showed the excellent performance of the opening ceremony in the programming, stage design, cultural display and other aspects, attracting the audience's attention, making people feel the charm of Asian culture and the profound heritage of Chinese culture, and laying a positive tone for the entire Asian Games.

Example 2

Athletes from all over Asia gathered in Hangzhou with great enthusiasm. They are looking forward to showing their strength on the field, winning glory for their country and contributing to the cause of Asian sports.

The words “enthusiasm” and “expectation” in the sentence express the athletes' positive attitude and eagerness for the competition. This not only reflects the athletes' love for sports and pursuit of honor, but also conveys that the Asian Games as a platform to gather the sports elites of Asian countries, stimulates everyone's enthusiasm and fighting spirit, promotes exchanges and competition among athletes of various countries, and creates a warm sports atmosphere.

Example 3

The 19th Asian Games commenced on Saturday night in Hangzhou, presenting not just another China-hosted sports gala to the world, but also an opportunity for Asian countries to shore up peace, solidarity and inclusiveness through the spirit of good sportsmanship.

The words "solidarity" and "inclusiveness" in the sentence express positive emotions. They embody the beautiful vision of the Asian Games to promote friendly coexistence and mutual acceptance among Asian countries, demonstrate people's expectations for the harmonious development of the Asian region, and create a positive and upward emotional atmosphere.

3.2 Judgment System

The evaluative framework pertains to language users' assessment of actions or phenomena based on established societal standards, legal statutes, and regulatory policies, which can be categorized into two principal domains: communal esteem and societal regulation. The former encompasses three dimensions - conventionality, proficiency, and resilience - while the latter examines event authenticity and behavioral legitimacy. The text strategically employs abundant affirmative terminology within the proficiency and resilience categories[9], successfully building a positive relationship between the author and readers. As Zhang Delu mentioned language can embody evaluative meanings.[10] The detailed analysis is as follows.

Example 4

China has earnestly fulfilled its promise to host a splendid Asian Games with Chinese characteristics and Asian style, and has demonstrated strong organizational skills in its preparatory work.

In this case, the two positive judgment resource words “perform” and “show” highlight China's responsibility as the host and excellent organizational ability. China has invested a lot of manpower,

material and financial resources in venue construction, event arrangement and service guarantee to ensure the smooth hosting of the Asian Games, which demonstrates China's strength and determination in hosting large-scale international sports events and has won recognition and respect from the international community.

Example 5

In the face of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers have been resilient and actively adjusted their preparation plans to prioritize green and smart events, contributing to sustainable development.

The words “perseverance” and “positive adjustment” here reflect the organizer’s tenacious spirit and coping ability in the face of difficulties. Although the epidemic has brought many uncertainties to the preparations for the Asian Games, the organizers have overcome many difficulties through innovative thinking and unremitting efforts to achieve green environmental protection and intelligence of the event, providing valuable experience for future large-scale sports events, and promoting the organic combination of sports with environmental protection and scientific and technological innovation.

Example 6

Over the past eight years, the organizers have prioritized hosting a green and smart event. Of the 56 competition venues for the Asian Games and Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, only 12 are newly constructed, with the remainder being renovated or temporarily erected.

"Prioritized" and "renovated" reflect the organizers' rational planning and effective resource utilization capabilities during the event preparation process. They are positive judgment of the organizers' capabilities, which are consistent with Yang Xing’s viewpoints. That is, when sports news authors describe the event preparation situation, they use words that reflect the organizers’ capabilities through stating these facts.[11] It showcases the concept of sustainable development and efficient execution capabilities.

3.3 Appreciation system

The Appreciation system refers to the evaluation of the value of things, which mainly involves the evaluation of entities (such as objects, people, institutions, etc.), processes (such as events, activities, etc.), and qualities (such as characteristics, traits, etc.). This system can be divided into three categories: response, composition and value. Reaction refers to the affective resonance of discourse on its audience; Textual composition denotes the equilibrium of organizational framework and accessibility of content. Discursive merit concerns whether written material possesses substantive worth relative to societal benchmarks. The analysis incorporates extensive lexical emphasis on resource valorization, underscoring the significance of the Hangzhou Asian Games while comprehensively elucidating its multidimensional contributions across athletic, cultural, and economic spheres. Four representative illustrations of valuation strategies are presented below.

Example 7

Phrases “grand” and “unique”, as well as the description of the scale, projects and scope of participation, show the grand momentum and unique charm of the Asian Games. The numerous events have provided a broad platform for athletes to display, attracted extensive participation from Asian countries, promoted the comprehensive development of Asian sports, and enhanced the influence of the Asian Games on the international sports stage.

Example 8

The Asian Games has not only provided a stage for athletes to compete, but more importantly, it has built a bridge for cultural exchanges and mutual understanding among Asian countries, which is of immeasurable value and significance.

Appreciation words such as “important”, “value” and “significance” in this sentence emphasize the key role of the Asian Games in promoting cultural exchanges. Through sports events, people from different countries and regions can have a deep understanding of each other’s culture, customs and values, enhance friendship and trust, and promote peace and development in Asia, which reflects the far-reaching cultural value of the Asian Games.

Example 9

With the Asian Games, Hangzhou, a picturesque metropolis, has showcased itself as a vibrant business and innovation center, adding a unique charm to the games.

The words “elegance” and “charm” here give a positive evaluation of the city of Hangzhou, highlighting the mutually reinforcing relationship between the Asian Games and urban development. The hosting of the Asian Games has enhanced Hangzhou’s international visibility and image of the city, while Hangzhou’s urban resources and innovative vitality have also provided strong support for the Asian Games, making the Asian Games more colorful, and the two have developed together to achieve a win-win situation.

Example 10

The 19th Asian Games, which was postponed for a year due to the COVID - 19 pandemic, is the third time China has hosted the Asiad, after Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010.

"Third time" indicates China's rich experience in hosting the Asian Games, reflects China's important position and excellent capabilities in hosting Asian sports event and conducts a positive appreciation of China's act of hosting the Asian Games from the perspective of value.

4. Conclusion

Based on the attitude system in appraisal theory and the positive discourse analysis method, this paper attempts to explore the positive discourse significance of attitude resources in the news corpus of China Daily about the Hangzhou Asian Games. Through the analysis of various resources in the full text, it shows the distribution of emotional resources, judgment resources and appreciation resources, among which appreciation resources and emotional resources account for a larger proportion, and judgment resources account for a moderate proportion. After careful statistics and analysis, we can draw the following conclusions.

First of all, the use of appreciation resources in the text, highly affirming the significance of the Hangzhou Asian Games, and expressing a strong will to promote the development of Asian sports and promote friendly cooperation between countries. It creates a harmonious emotional atmosphere for readers, conveys China’s determination to actively promote the progress of Asian sports, promote cultural exchanges, and build an Asian community of shared future, and shows China’s responsibility and responsibility on the international sports stage.

Secondly, the positive words in the emotional resources reflect the positive attitude and emotional investment of all parties to the Hangzhou Asian Games. The enthusiastic participation of the athletes, the careful preparation of the organizers, and the expectation and support of the audience all show that the Asian Games has aroused people’s love for sports and the yearning for Asian unity, promoted the emotional exchanges among Asian countries, and injected strong impetus into the cause of Asian sports.

Finally, in the text, the use of judgment resources words, which reflects China’s excellent organizational ability, tenacity in coping with difficulties and practice of sustainable development concept shown in the process of hosting the Asian Games. These capabilities not only ensure the success of the Asian Games, but also provide valuable experience for the organization of large-scale sports events in the future, and promote the development of sports in Asia to a higher level and more sustainable direction.

Through the positive discourse analysis of attitude resources, we can see that by creating a positive language environment for the news discourse of the Hangzhou Asian Games, domestic media enhanced the sense of identity and participation of Asian countries in the Asian Games, and enhanced China's image and influence in the international sports field. It demonstrates China's firm conviction in promoting the development of sports in Asia and building an Asian community of shared future.

However, there are still some shortcomings in this paper. For example, due to space constraints, the analysis is only conducted from the perspective of attitude resources, but in fact, it can also be studied from other aspects. In addition, the analysis material is relatively limited, and a large number of statistical data can be obtained from more long texts, which will make the analysis results more reliable. In future research, it is possible to use corpora from multiple sources and analyze discourse at the sentence level, not just confined to words or phrases.

In conclusion, the positive discourse analysis based on the attitude system of Appraisal Theory effectively reveals the positive discourse meaning of attitude resources in the news discourse of the Hangzhou Asian Games in China Daily. Although there are limitations in this study, it provides ideas and directions for subsequent related research.

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