

The Implicitness Constructed and Translated in Diplomatic Discourse: a perspective from grammatical metaphor

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation focuses on the translation of implicitness in Diplomatic Discourse (DD). The main corpus in this study is taken from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs web coverage of the 2001 Hainan Air-Collision Incident in both Chinese and English. It is argued that Grammatical Metaphor (GM) and Conceptual Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics can be blended as a major implicitness-creating mechanism. In this dissertation, Zhu's (1996) threefold analytical framework SOM (Structure of Meaning) is modified for a descriptive and explanatory study of translational treatment of implicitness. The first two components of SOM: *linguistic composition* and *interactional dynamics*, are kept while the third one, *aesthetic impact*, is further specified as *perlocutionary imaging*.

Implicitness can be a prominent feature of DD produced in conflict-resolution scenarios. It is employed for covering up information not sharable with the public out of national interests. Implicitness can be regarded as being motivated by interpersonal considerations oriented by the desired public responses.

Previous researches, e.g. Zadeh (1965), Channell (1994), Cutting (2007), and Zhang (1998), have classified linguistic representations of implicitness mainly as lexical phenomena, i.e. ambiguity, vagueness, fuzziness, and generality. These phenomena can also be taken as grammatical because 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 (Halliday 2008). These needs at times would cause the tension between discourse semantics and the lexicogrammar in language. As a solution to the tension, GM emerges at the lexicogrammatical level and out of the need of discourse semantics. A GM is "the expression of a meaning through a lexico-grammatical form which originally evolved to express a different kind of meaning" (Thompson 2004:165). 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 the notions of Radial Category and Conceptual Metaphor

in the intra-organistic Cognitive Linguistics into the GM theory necessary. Firstly, Cognitive Linguistics lends a set of 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. In this dissertation, it is hypothesized that lexical choice comes before grammatical configuring in the construction of 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 of readers' responses from China, the U.S., and Singapore in the forms of news stories, editorials, and interviews, 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 according 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; and 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.

KEYWORDS: air collision, diplomatic discourse, grammatical metaphor, human element, implicitness, interpersonal prominence, SOM, translation.

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