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A pragmatic study of the reporting of negative news

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ABSTRACT

This paper mainly presents the bases for the topic "a pragmatic analysis of the reporting of negative news", which is one of the series of topics related with pragmatic analysis of fake news and negative news. Six parts are involved, Section 1 is the introduction, in this part, theoretical and practical significance of the topic is introduced. The focus of Section 2 is on necessity of the research. Section 3, through the description of the literature review of this study, and the lack of analysis of negative news from the perspective of pragmatics, especially that of Grice's cooperative principle, this article aims to explain clearly the bases for the selected topic. Section 4 discusses the originality. Section 5 deals with the difficulty of the selected topic and its feasibility as well. Finally, Section 6 serves as conclusion. The research reveals that it is worthwhile to make a pragmatic study of the reporting of negative news.

KEYWORDS

Cooperative principle; Negative news report; Linguistics; Pragmatics; Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In this part, theoretical and practical significance of the topic "a pragmatic study of the reporting of negative news" is introduced, at the same time, the necessity of the research is also dealt with.

Theoretical significance

In the aspect of completely eradicating fake news, the journalistic world has always regard authenticity as the life of news. How to put an end to fake news has been a focused issue by the Press, and at the same time, it has also aroused the interest of the field of pragmatics. Whether or not we can make a study of the causes, background of the news and harms caused by it? Whether or not we can regulate the whole process of the making as well as the reproducing of the news using linguistic theory? Is it possible for us to find the gist to punishing fake news from the perspective of pragmatics? In the aspect of linguistic study of negative news report, it is pressed for a theory to making an analysis of who being lying and restoring the truth.

In terms of pragmatic research on fake news and negative news, up to now, there still isn't a theory applying to pragmatic analysis of news discourse which can be depended upon. The aim of the research is twofold, firstly, through the study of fake news, the author puts forward a "maxim of news quality" which should be abided by media with the goal of enriching Grice's cooperative principle. Secondly, through the pragmatic study of negative news, a theoretical model for pragmatic analysis of negative news discourse is established, and a pragmatic discourse differences between the two parties involved in the negative news event is founded, so as to further perfect and lay a theoretical foundation for the pragmatic analysis of news discourse.

Practical significance

Taking the example of newly-happening fake news, this paper, through the introducing of the maxim of quality of Grice's cooperative principle into the analysis of fake news, puts forward a theory of "maxim of news quality" which should be abided by the press, tries to make a distinction between the making and the spreading of fake news using the theory, probes into the relationship between the basic moral requirement of the journalists and related legal norms, attempts to analyze, explain the issues related with the now-rampant fake news phenomenon using this theory and also analyzes the responsibility and protection measures on such news.

How to find the particular pragmatic norms or rules suitable for analyzing news discourse? When the wake and the strong side tell lies, what are the lies they are telling respectively? What pragmatic norms are they violating, and how? What are the reasons for their violating? How to judge whether they are breaching such norms or not? What are the pragmatic differences between the strong as well as the wake side telling lies? Which pragmatic rules should the media follow in communicating with both parties involved?

Such pragmatic studies of fake news has certain practical value for the investigating into the responsibility and precautionary measure on it, and at the same time, the pragmatic research into negative news reporting also has popularization value, since it offers a theoretical basis for the media to get involved into the truth investigation of related events from another perspective.

NECESSITY OF THE RESEARCH SECTION

Although different scholars make a study on fake news, negative news reporting from the point of view of journalism and communication, and also have made some progress, yet in the framework of pragmatics, studies of them are few. Grice's principle of pragmatics has rich application in other types of discourse analysis, but as far as negative news reporting is concerned, such application is few. It is necessary to establish an exclusive pragmatic principle suitable for false news analysis, in order to analyze the responsibility of it. It is also necessary to find the exclusive pragmatic rules and use them to guide other news discourse analysis by analyzing the discourses of both parties in negative news reporting. This research can expand the application of Grice's theory of conversational implicature to news discourse analysis, at the same time, through it, we can also find exclusive pragmatic rules in news discourse analysis, so as to enrich the theory of pragmatics. Therefore, it is very necessary to carry on such research.

PRAGMATIC RESERCH STATUS OF NEGATIVE NEWS REPORT AT HOME AND ABROAD

Through the description of the literature review of this topic, and the lack of analysis of negative news from the perspective of pragmatics, especially that of Grice's cooperative principle, this paper aims to explain clearly the basis for the selected topic.

Negative news

News is a timely reporting of what has recently happened and is happening, or what has already happened but only recently discovered its valuable facts. The characteristics of news include authenticity, timeliness, accuracy, and the most important of these is authenticity. "Negative news" is a concept in contrast to the "positive", it refers to "negative", "bad", or "the wrong side" news, and also refers to such reporting of what is recently happening[1] Negative news can expose

contradictions in the social life, reproduce the dark side of society and urge people to have a deep reflection on some unhealthy and abnormal social phenomena, thus it can carry forward the social positive energy and promote the development of a harmonious society from another perspective. At present, the research on negative news is mainly from journalism and communication, few analyses are taking from the perspective of pragmatic theory, especially from Grice's cooperative principle.

Negative news reporting

Negative news reporting refers to a kind of news reporting with negative factors. The source of the news is truth, the characterization of the existing way of things and its state of motion[2]

Li Tao[3], He Shuqun[4], etc, conduct related theoretical research in terms of communication, and have also arrived at some beneficial conclusion. Juan Li[5], Liang Yanjun[6], Wong Yulian[7], Liu di[8], Ahmad M. Atawneh[9] do their linguistic research on news report respectively.

At present domestic research into negative news reporting focus on journalism and communication, linguistic analyses of news discourse focus on critical discourse analysis, functional grammar,, stylistics, discourse analysis, speech act theory, etc. There are also a few analyses from the perspective of pragmatics.

The application of pragmatics in the news

Nowadays scholars mainly make the study of news language from two aspects, to begin with, common linguistics researchers lay their stress on the micro study of pronunciation, words, and words combination. Next, pragmatists beginning with the macro point of view, are liable to analyze elements which could exert their influences to the final linguistic output in news language, and also stress the close connection between language and society[10]. The research of news in terms of pragmatics mainly stay at the study of presupposition, fuzzy language, the role of direct speech in the news, pragmatic analysis of news language, etc. Up to now, we have not found any related literature about the research on negative news reporting from the perspective of Gricean pragmatic theory.

News as discourse

We shouldn't talk about news discourse analysis without mentioning the famous Dutch scholar Van Dijk[11]. In the introduction to his famous book "News as discourse", the author argues that discourse analysis and the media or the mass media are closely linked, so it is necessary to understand the new development of discourse analysis. This book focuses on one of the most important types of media: news in the newspaper. Another point of view of the book is to establish the connection between news discourse and cognition. The author thinks that in the study of journalism and mass media, of supreme importance is this kind of interdisciplinary research on the combination of discourse and cognition. At the same time, we must recognize that both discourse and news are the products of society. If we ignore their social and cultural factors, we can't really understand the mass communication and journalism.

Similarly, Ding Hegen[12] makes a theoretical comment on Van Dijk's news discourse structure. Through the in-depth study of news discourse, he puts forward a set of news basic model for the analysis of news discourse structure. In this model, the news pattern which has its own structure of basic category and organization system can be described as the grammatical structure of news text. The exploration of news discourse structure can promote our better understanding of the rules and mode of operation of news discourse, open up a new realm of news academic research.

Zeng Qingxiang[13], in her doctoral dissertation demonstrates news discourse in five aspects. She argues news is works that reporters describe and construct incidents with a system of language in the social, political and cultural context. It is dynamic, as a result, we may regard news as discourse and make an analysis of it.

Foreign scholars' researches into news discourse include, Semetko, H. and Valkenburg's[14] content analysis of press and television news, Jeongsub Lim's[15] cross-lagged analysis of agenda setting among online news media, YEW-JIN FANG's[16] critical analysis of Chinese print news media texts, etc.

GRICEAN THEORY OF CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE

Conversational implicature

The theory of conversational implicature, one of the most important research fields in pragmatics, was originated by the Oxford philosopher H. P. Grice. The central ideas were introduced by him in the William James Lectures delivered at Harvard in 1967 and were partially collected and published in Grice[17]. Since then, it has inspired a strong reaction in the field of linguistics. Stephen C. Levinson[18] and Geoffrey N. Leech, in their works "Pragmatics" and "Principles of Pragmatics respectively, regard it as one of the single most important ideas in pragmatics. Yan Huang[19] also speaks highly of it. In his classics "Pragmatics", he says "Since its inception, the Gricean paradigm has revolutionized pragmatic theorizing and to date remains one of the cornerstones of contemporary thinking in linguistic pragmatics and the philosophy of language". Pragmatics' developing from one concept in semiotics into an independent language subject owes a lot to Grice's conversational implicature theory and speech act theory put forward by Austin and Searle.

Cooperative principle

The core of conversational implicature theory is cooperative principle. Grice argues that in our talk exchanges, each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. He then expresses clearly a rough general principle which participants will be expected to abide by, namely: Make

your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the Cooperative Principle (CP). He classifies it into four categories: Quality, Quantity, Relation and Manner. The maxims of conversation: Quality: try to make your contribution one that is true. Quantity: (1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange) (2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. Relation: Be relevant. Manner: Be perspicuous. The cooperative principle and its attended maxims ensure that in a talk exchange, appropriate information is provided and that the conversation is conducted in a truthful, relevant and perspicuous manner.

Since its emergence, CP has attracted a lot of linguists' attention and it also has drawn a mixed response from them. Some scholars make comments on it, others revise it and develop it into neo-Gricean pragmatics, and still others make some analyses centering on the understanding of this principle.

Comments on Grice's cooperative principle and its application and development

Ever since its inception, Grice's theory of cooperative principle has received analysis and comments by other linguists and conversational theorists. Leech argues that cooperative principle has limitations, in his view, human conversational communication more often show a social attributes, each person must follow certain social rules in communication. To mend the insufficiency of cooperative principle in the analysis of street indirect speech, Leech puts forward his "Politeness Principle". Although politeness principle is not another maxim of cooperative principle, it effectively makes up for the shortage of CP, improves the explanation of pragmatic linguistic phenomenon and social pragmatic phenomenon in verbal communication.

Jaszczolt[20] argues that in any case, it's difficult for Grice's various maxims including all the discourse strategies in verbal communication, and conversational implicature theory cannot explain why people violate some maxims in communication.etc. In this case, we need to seek other ways, so as to explain language use in communication more reasonably. Thus polite, politeness strategies naturally became factors closely related with language use and understanding, Brown & Levinson[21] and Leech conduct discussion on the concept of politeness, face, politeness principle and so on.

Because the names of the four categories are taken from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, this philosophy origin makes the cooperative principle highly recapitulate and have certain explanatory power[22]. American scholar Green[23] is one of the scholars who make every effort to expand the explanatory power of cooperative principle. Through declarative sentence, She re-expresses the cooperation principle proposed by Grice as follows: people will act according to their own goal. In a sense, the cooperative principle has universal application. Cooperative Principle and its maxims can be applied to both verbal communication based on conversation and also non-verbal communication. In addition to both speakers and hearers in a conversation mutually cooperating, the two sides should cooperate with each other in other forms of communication[24]. Since its advent, Gricean pragmatic theory has revolutionized pragmatic theorizing, generating a large number of reinterpretations, revisions and reconstructions in addition to numerous comments. Kasher[25] points out that conversational maxims stem from rational principles instead of CP, he stands for taking the place of it with Rationality Principle,which he thinks more powerful. Yao Xiaodong[26] argues that it is unnecessary to make such a replacement. According to him, Kasherian rationality is instrumental, in contrast, the Gricean theory is fundamentally argumentative. He then arrives at the conclusion that Kasher's effort,though seeming unnecessary,is a rescue of Cooperative Principle by directing researchers' attention to what's lying behind it.

Of all the reductionist models, the most influential are the two-principled Hornian and the three-principled Levinsonian neo-Gricean pragmatic theories. Bethan Davies[27], in his article argues that people have a poor understanding of the cooperative principle. They seem to connect the technical concept of the word used by Grice with the general meaning of the lexeme together. Part of the misunderstanding comes from the resetting of CP from philosophy to linguistics. As a result, the author proposes that in order to have a better understanding of Grice's original intention, it is necessary for us to carefully study the writings about cooperative principle and its meaning. After careful consideration, we will find that the concept of cooperation in his mind is only a by-product of his repeated issues of the difference between sentence meaning and speaker meaning, and the systematicness of language as well. Sonja Kleinke[28] argues that current pragmatic research and cognitive analysis also contribute to the understanding of Grice's thought.

Though there are different comments on Cooperative Principle, yet it remains one of the most influential theories in pragmatics, and it is widely acknowledged that it possesses a wide application scope.

THE APPLICATION OF THE GRICEAN THEORY

The application of it in humor, crosstalk discourse analysis

At home, Gricean theory is partly used to analyze humor in movie, TV, sketch, advertisement and conversation, etc. such as, Liu Yanjie[29]'s " Pragmatic Analysis of Humor in Friends", Guo Lijian's[30] "the pragmatic analysis of classic dialogues in Feng Xiaogang's comedy ", Wang Lina, Chen Chonggen's[31] "On the application and the violation of cooperation principle in crosstalk", Yang Guang's[32] "a Comparative Analysis of Humor in Zhao Benshan's Sketches in terms of Relevance Theory and Cooperative Principle ", Zhang Shujing's[33] "A pragmatic analysis of humor", etc.

The application of CP in discourse analysis related with news

Up to now, we have not found a great amount of literature in the analysis of media discourse using Gricean theory. The representative of them is written by Chen Hong. In his article, he analyzes the language strategies employed in the Chinese press spokesmen's language of answers to reporters' questions based on CP.

Chen Shan[34] in the "A study of the athlete's discourse choice making in press conference", based on Grice's CP and Leech's politeness principle, she conducts a study of the athletes' discourse in response to journalists in the sports news conference. These athletes include Guo Jingjing, Liu Xiang and Yao Ming in the sports news conference. She derives the semantic meaning according to both quantity and quality maxims. Results indicate that athletes in answering questions should abide by the basic conversational cooperative principle as well as "intend to violate" the principles of cooperation", so as to maintain a good public image in front of the media.

Lu Lu[35] discusses the position of cooperative principle in public discourse. By analyzing the former ministry of railways spokesman Wang Yongping's controversial speech caused by the violation of "CP" in the conference of Wenzhou CRH accident, the author argues that the following of CP in their speech can help public figures set up a good image of being honest, rigorous, brave and compassionate, and can also help them and the institutions represented by them fulfill their social responsibility better in communication with the public.

Lin Gang[36] in his doctoral dissertation "The pragmatic analysis of internet news language', argues that the internet news language exerts various pragmatic errors and he also analyzes the reasons for it. He suggests that we should regulate it and consider its distinctive quality. The specificity of Internet news language context determines that the language must, on the one hand, follows the principle of economy and the principle of clarity, and on the other hand, employs friendly and embellishment strategies.

ORGINALITY

Though plenty of scholars have conducted researches into fake news and negative news from the perspective of journalism and communication, and there are also many scholars carrying on research on Gricean pragmatic principles and its application, yet few of them analyze fake and negative news reporting using such pragmatic principles. This study aims to make a study on the following questions.

Whether or not we can analyze, discover and summarize "pragmatic principle of news" using Gricean pragmatic theory? Can we make a judgment of the responsibility for the producing of fake news and its preventive measures as well? Could "news pragmatic principle" be used as self-discipline principle for the news media industry?

In the negative news reporting with language conflicting (contrasting), how the weak side and the strong side express their opinions respectively? What are the differences between their means of expression? What are the differences between their descriptions towards the whole event? Why is there such imparity? Whether or not the both sides violate some pragmatic principles? What's the reason for their violation? How to judge such a violation? And pragmatic principles are summed up in the end for both parties to follow.

Through the probing into the above question, the author aims to establish a comprehensive pragmatic analytic theory about negative news reporting and account for it as well.

THE DIFFICUTY OF THE SELECTED TOPIC AND ITS FEASILITY

The applying of pragmatic theory into media news reporting involves two disciplines-pragmatics and journalism, it is apparent that it is an interdisciplinary studies, we have to be well acquainted with both subjects, especially the latest development in each side before we can conduct further studies, as a result, the study remains challenging. Besides, pragmatic theory is general instructional for discourse analysis, but as far as news discourse is concerned, we need to conduct a pragmatic research and study on a great amount of news corpus in order to find an exclusive pragmatic rules suitable for news discourse analysis. So, much work needs to be done. Hopefully, many a scholar provides beneficial experience and methods for the research of the project with their discourse analysis in other aspects and we can draw some hints from them.

Through the course learning in this doctoral stage, the author has grasped the necessary linguistic theory, at the same time, she also audits part of the course in journalism and communication course, consults the related literature in both Chinese and English, writes two articles entitled "News quality maxim" and the authenticity of news reporting" and "A pragmatic analysis of the event-FoShan style civilized law enforcement based on cooperative principle". This paper, serving as the basis of the author's doctoral dissertation "A pragmatic study of the reporting of negative news", deals with its theoretical, practical significance, feasibility and originality as well.

CONCLUSION

With Grice's cooperative principle as the theoretical basis of this study, the author aims to sum up the "News quality maxim" for the distinction between the making and the transmission of news. Through the pragmatic analysis of negative news reporting, the author also hopes to obtain the discourse pragmatic characteristics and exclusive pragmatic principles of the two parties involved in the negative news event. With the popularizing of such principles, the application scope of the related pragmatic theory is hoped to be enriched and improved. This paper mainly deals with the bases for the introducing of the topic "a pragmatic analysis of the reporting of negative news", it is one of the series of articles related with pragmatic analysis of fake news and negative news. The results of the study are to be included in the author's doctoral dissertation. The research reveals that it is worthwhile to make a pragmatic study of negative news reporting.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This article content has no conflict of interest.

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