

A Study on the Construction of National Image in Xinhuanet's Editorial on the V-Day Military Parade from the Perspective of Appraisal Theory

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Abstract

Drawing on the Appraisal Theory and Periodicity Theory, this study conducts a discourse cohesion and interpersonal meaning analysis of the announcement editorial on Xinhuanet's V-Day commemorative activities, examining macroTheme, macroNew, hyperTheme, and hyperNew thematic progression patterns. Compared to traditional discourse cohesion analysis, periodicity assists in clarifying the discourse's wave-like theme-new information structure; when combined with appraisal theory, the analysis reveals coherent interpersonal meanings, thereby avoiding abrupt shifts in attitude. Through meticulous theme selection, rigorous discourse cohesion, and substantial argumentation, commentators establish an objective 'Peacekeeper' China's national image.

Keywords

Interpersonal meaning; periodicity; Editorial; national Image.

1. Introduction

In recent years, scholars have innovatively integrated appraisal theory with discourse cohesion to provide a new, integrative path for multidimensional discourse analysis of news discourse. Along this path, what development pattern does the reporting information exhibit? Through the synergistic effects of cohesion mechanisms and evaluative resources, this study aims to explore the following three issues: what interpersonal meaning is constructed? And What national images do these discourse strategies shape together?

2. Periodicity and Interpersonal Meaning

Building on Halliday's Theme theory [2], Martin and Rose [5] expand the information flow to the discourse level, proposing an open hierarchy with macroTheme, hyperTheme, Theme, macroNew, hyperNew, New. This new thematic progression patterns constitute the concept of Periodicity.

Appraisal theory, proposed by Martin, is a framework for analyzing the interpersonal meanings manifested in discourse. We can examine the speaker's attitude toward the evaluative object from multiple angles, such as mood and lexis. It comprises three subsystems: the Attitude System, the Engagement System, and the Graduation System, with the Attitude System at its core.

Combined with periodicity, the macroTheme and hyperTheme, while predicting information content, also convey the author's attitude toward the topic—praise or condemnation. Their evaluative stance permeates across the entire discourse, like an ongoing rhythm weaving

through the development of the text. In short, appraisal theory helps us analyze interpersonal meaning from the lexical level, while periodicity helps us analyze interpersonal meaning from the level of discourse structure[1], deepening our understanding of the ideologies embedded in news while also effectively preventing emotional discontinuities.

3. The Multiple constructions of the ‘Peacekeeper’ National Image

According to statistical analysis of the manually annotated corpus for UAMCT6.2, appraisal resources constitute the primary means of evaluation, with the author constructing the nation’s image through a multitude of direct or indirect judgements.

The proportion of intervening resources reflects a direct and affirmative narrative style, emphasising the text’s authority and certainty; this aligns with the report’s function as a preview intended to articulate China’s stance and attitude. The specific distribution characteristics of appraisal resources are shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

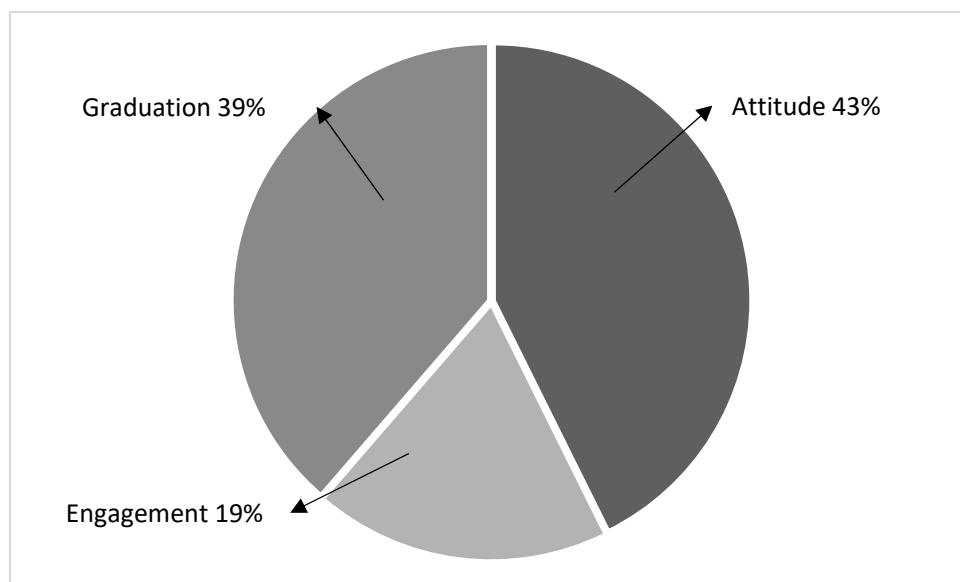


Figure 1. Distribution of appraisal resources

Table 1. Distribution Characteristics of Attitude Resources

Attitude	Number	percentage (%)
Affect	2	6.25
Judgement	10	31.25
Appreciation	20	62.5
Total	32	100

Xinhua Commentary: China's V-Day commemorations are a call for world peace (macroTheme) The upcoming V-Day military parade in Beijing will be a significant occasion to demonstrate China's determination, will and capacity to resolutely safeguard its national sovereignty, security and development interests, and to firmly uphold world peace. (hyperTheme)

As the macroTheme of a discourse, the title of an article functions as the starting point of the entire discourse’s information, foreshadowing the hyperTheme of the discourse and the core content to be expounded. In the opening paragraph, the commentator deploys multiple appraisal resources to articulate a strong stance on the significance of holding the military

parade: The engagement resource ‘will be’ reduces the uncertainty associated with the future and delivers an affirmative prediction, thereby effectively addressing and dispelling potential negative challenges at the dialogic level. Neutral expressions such as ‘resolutely safeguard’ inherently lack attitudinal meaning, yet they are identified as implicit evaluations in specific contexts. Such evaluations exhibit a high degree of context dependence, and their interpretation often relies on the shared historical, cultural contexts and value systems between the author and the reader [1]. In this context, the prevailing consensus is that in the international community, it is correct and ethical for any country to safeguard its sovereignty and maintain world peace.

With a wave-like progression, the hyperTheme in the third paragraph—‘Eighty years after the end of World War II, the global peace deficit is increasing markedly due to geopolitical conflicts, hegemony and unilateralism, among other challenges.’—serves both to review the background and to provide a logical extension of the new information introduced at the end of the second paragraph: ‘...an important part of the country’s commemorations of...the victory in the Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War’. The text is thus intricately interwoven, with its meaning unfolding in a coherent, layered progression [1]. In terms of interpersonal meaning, the discussion of a chaotic and dangerous geopolitical landscape serves to emphasize the extraordinary importance of the parade in maintaining peace; although the commentator does not use explicit appraisal terms, the choice of conceptual terms is sufficient to imply an evaluation [6], as geopolitical conflicts and the like carry strongly negative social connotations.

Therefore, the third paragraph extends the article’s logic to the choices facing humanity today: ‘Humanity now stands at a crossroads, encountering a stark choice: dialogue or confrontation, win-win cooperation or zero-sum games.’ By placing ‘humanity’ at the theme, this not only embodies the concept of a ‘community with a shared future for mankind’, but also provides the reader with a focal point for empathy and reflection.

The sixth paragraph lists a series of proposals put forward by China, ranging from the ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’ to the ‘Community with a Shared Future for Mankind’, thereby enhancing the persuasiveness of the article. ‘These initiatives have won widespread support and participation, and have contributed significantly to promoting shared prosperity and world peace.’ By using the impersonal Theme ‘These initiatives’, the text objectively states that China has garnered widespread global support and participation, emphasising the fact that it has made significant contributions to promoting shared prosperity and world peace, and referring back to the previous appraisal terms such as ‘capable’. ‘Widespread’ appears superficially to be a quantitative resource within the gradation system, but it is believed that, at the pragmatic level, it serves an engagement function, transforming the support of the majority into an invisible force, contracting the space for dialogue, and indirectly demonstrating China’s national strength.

The article is actually structured in reverse chronological order, reflecting a marked temporal organisation at the discourse level [4]. The opening paragraph uses the ‘present’ as an anchor to state the purpose of the event, leaving the central question of why history should be commemorated to be addressed later. Subsequent paragraphs draw on the ‘past to construct a solid picture of historical facts, thereby demonstrating the justice of China’s actions.

For example, the eighth paragraph ‘China was the main theater in the East of the World Anti-Fascist War. The Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression from 1931 to 1945 was the first to break out in the world war, and it lasted the longest. The war caused over 35 million Chinese military and civilian casualties, including more than 300,000 people killed by Japanese troops in the Nanjing Massacre’.

The commentator adopts a restrained and dispassionate tone, objectively revealing the immense sacrifices made by China as the main theatre of war in the East, as well as the aggressors' crimes against humanity. By employing a wealth of quantitative and judgement resources, and treating the abstract concept of the 'The Chinese People's War of Resistance' as the theme, every grammatical structure conveys the writer's emotional tone and ideological stance [3]. Such phrasing endows the 'War of Resistance' with agency, highlighting its temporal endurance and pioneering nature, and expressing the spiritual core of the Chinese nation—its indomitable spirit and perseverance in the face of adversity. This presentation of facts proves more persuasive than subjective denunciations, prompting readers to redefine China's military parades and to reflect deeply on the cruelty of war, whilst also laying a tragic yet legitimate historical foundation for the construction of the image of 'peacekeeper'.

Finally, the text unfolds in a wave-like rhythm, culminating in the ninth paragraph with a logical closure that bridges history and the present: 'The traumatic experiences of war make Chinese people value peace all the more. Among those to participate in the V-Day parade are China's peacekeepers. China is the largest contributor of peacekeeping troops among the permanent members of the UN Security Council. The stronger China grows, the more secure the world will be.' The use of graduation resources such as 'all the more' and 'the largest' indicates that it is the bitter experience of war that has made the Chinese people cherish peace all the more; the text builds up layer by layer, remaining closely focused on the thesis. The underlined section at the end of the text employs the interplay of engagement and gradation resources, using the simple 'the more...the more' structure to form a perfect logical loop, asserting the causal relationship between 'China's strength' and 'global security'—namely, that the stronger China becomes, the safer the world will be. This is a powerful rebuttal of the 'China threat theory'. The concept of a 'community with a shared future for mankind' is not an empty slogan, but a solemn commitment that China has made to the world and which it is determined to put into practice.

4. Conclusion

Research has found that this editorial exhibits a complete hierarchical structure of periodicity, employs explicit cohesive devices[7], and that the combined application of periodicity and appraisal theory assists readers in accurately discerning shifts in the author's attitude. Xinhua News Agency draws upon significant historical events and China's outstanding contributions in the new era to strengthen its narrative, thereby presenting a multi-dimensional and objective portrayal of China's national image as a 'peacekeeper'.

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