# THE REPORTER'S VOICE IN HARD NEWS REPORTS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE – VIEWS FROM CONTEXT, SEMANTICS, AND LEXICOGRAMMAR[i]

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ABSTRACT: *The present paper provides an outline of the research framework for describing and modelling a domain of language construing the reporter's assessment (or appraisal) within the register of hard news reporting in English and Japanese. It proposes the way of modelling a system of interpersonal semantics in Japanese. The research will suggests that a meaning can be illuminated by finding evidences within lexicogrammar.*

Key words: appraisal, hard news, lexicogrammar, English and Japanese

## 1. Introduction

In research on media discourse, the interpersonal orientation of hard news reports has been ever more foregrounded. The need for studying the language of evaluation has formulated the 'appraisal theory' in Systemic Functional Linguistics. In the present paper, I will report an outline of the framework designed for my ongoing long-term research project on modelling the reporter's assessment (or evaluation) within the register of hard news reporting. Here appraisal is a part of the semantic resources defining 'reporter voice', which is a kind of authorial voice characterising the given register. This research will describe the general resources of appraisal in Japanese vis-à-vis English and the register-specific resources of appraisal in hard news reporting. Based on paradigmatic perspective, the paper suggests that a meaning can be illuminated by finding evidences within lexicogrammar; and it proposes how to model the area of interpersonal semantics in Japanese as well as English.

The research in focus has been motivated by the following two different areas of inquiry – news discourse and appraisal. 'Hard news reporting' is one of the registers (or text types) occurring in media discourse, and it is considered Field-oriented because of its social purpose – describing and chronicling events. On the other hand, an emphasis has been placed on its Tenor-oriented features represented as reporter voice (Iedema,

Feez, & White, 1994; White, 2003b). From the interpersonal point of view, hard news reporting exhibits a conflicting nature: while the media claims 'objectivity' in their news reporting (e.g. A. Bell, 1991), research has identified ideological biases in the language of news in various ways (e.g. A. Bell, 1991; P. Bell & van Leeuwen, 1994; Butt, Lukin, & Matthiessen, 2004; Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1979, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Iedema, 1995, 1997; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1998; Lakoff, 2000; Schiller, 1981; Trew, 1979; van Dijk, 1988, 1998; van Leeuwen, 1986, 1987). The tension between news reporting and its 'objectivity' is explained by Iedema et al. (1994), discussing that the notion of 'objectivity' is in fact a "rhetorical effect" that naturalises the ideological biases in news. This research therefore firstly inquires how the language of hard news report employs the grammatical resources to enact a reporter's assessment of the information presented as news in order to achieve their rhetorical goal.

The second question is about an analytical issue of appraisal meanings. Appraisal has been studied in the context of Systemic Functional Linguistics (e.g. Eggins & Slade, 1997; Iedema, Feez, & White, 1994; Martin, 1986, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2003a). It is an interpersonal semantic system concerning "evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned" (Martin & Rose, 2003: 22). One of the difficulties inherent in appraisal analysis is that appraisal meanings manifest in a dispersed manner ranging over class, rank, metafunction, and phonology/graphology. Therefore, it is hard to describe the semantic choice as a configuration of constituents when it is realized in the grammar (Martin, 1995a). The present paper will propose a way of describing and modelling the interpersonal metafunction within the register of interest.

## 2. Data and text type

The study is text-based as well as corpus-based. The data for this study is drawn from a corpus that I have been building. Data sources are the Internet WebPages and hard copies of newspapers. The texts for analysis are newspaper articles that belong to the text type of hard news reports. Then, what is the text type of hard news report? According to the category for the media texts provided by Iedema et al. (1994: 78), the social purpose of the genre called 'hard news story' is "chronicling events and indicating their social relevance". In addition to the social purpose and structure, they differentiate 'hard news story' from other

media texts in terms of authorial voice: the characteristic feature of reporter voice is "no explicit judgement" (ibid, 1994: 308).

However, we haven't yet described the appraisal meanings such as 'explicit judgement' lexicogrammatically; therefore, this study will temporarily apply the classification provided by the news source as a hypothetical category for the given text type.  Since the focus of the study is on investigating appraisal meanings enacted by the reporter, the texts selected for analysis are those with highly sensational and controversial events as the field reported on, which would raise emotional responses and require a high level of evidentiality.  For example, the event reported in the texts I am currently working on is a discursive one, North Korea's nuclear pronouncement first transmitted on February 10, 2005.  As the category for the text type employed in this study is a tentative one, the selection of the texts for analysis will be refined in the course of the research on profiling the given text type.

In order to model the targeted domain, let's observe how it can be construed semantically based on Halliday & Matthiessen (1999: Ch. 4). Morphologically, "hard news report" consists of "hard news" and "report".  Experientially, the thing type of "hard news" is semiotic object and that of "report" is semiotic abstraction, which is a metaphorical realization of the figure of 'saying', specifically, verbal Process 'report'. The Participants that may form a configuration associating with this figure are Sayer, Receiver, Target, and Verbiage.  Thus, although they are not represented explicitly, Sayer is the reporter, Receiver is the reader(s), Target is the event reported, and Verbiage is the content of the hard news in this context.  Interpersonally, the act of exchange is "report" and the commodity exchanged is the reporter's strategy of how he/she reports the "news".  Therefore, experientially the reporter as Sayer construes the domain of experience where the figure of 'saying' belongs; simultaneously, interpersonally the reporter as Appraiser enacts assessment (or appraisal) on what is construed as the commodity exchanged through the act of exchange.

## 3.  Modelling the domain

### 3.1.    Describing the domain – trinocular perspective

In Systemic Functional Linguistics, a text is considered as "the product of ongoing selection in a very large network of systems – a system network" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 23).  The paradigmatic perspective motivates a view on language as a multi-dimensional

semiotic space, where a specific domain of language can be described in relation to features of other areas (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2004; Matthiessen, in press-a). Through system network, the location of an area of language is specified by means of the entry condition of a system, and the system is described by realization statements in relation to other features on any dimension of language. Therefore, describing an area of language means to motivate grammatical features that describe paradigmatic relations as syntagmatic ones to encode semantic distinctions.

Owing to the stratification of language, realization is possible not only within a system network but also along the hierarchy of stratification of language; therefore, the description is also possible across semiotic strata with different levels of abstraction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Martin & Matthiessen, 1991). With trinocular perspective (cf. Halliday, 1979), the given domain can be connected by shunting from the three different angles including the view "from above", "from roundabout" (or "from within"), and "from below". In order to describe and model the domain in question, let's specify its semiotic address (David Butt, referred in Matthiessen, in press-a) of the APPRAISAL network and look at it trinocularly along the stratification in connecting it to its adjacent strata.

The system of APPRAISAL is included in that of ASSESSMENT, and located within the interpersonal metafunction of the semantic stratum (Matthiessen, in press-b). The interpersonal metafunction is "clause as exchange" that enacts social roles and relations (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 61). It includes "the system of MOOD, POLARITY, MODALITY, EVIDENTIALITY, MODE and other forms of ASSESSMENT" in the lexicogrammar" (Matthiessen, in press-b: 25). With trinocular perspective, the APPRAISAL network can be viewed in the following manner[ii]:

(i) "from above" – from the level of context, identifying the relationship between tenor-based valuations and fields reported on;

(ii) "from roundabout" (or "from within") – from the level of semantic system itself, identifying semantic strategies for enacting valuations;

(iii) "from below" – from the level of lexicogrammar, taking both lexis and grammar into consideration.

Since the domain in question is located within the semantic stratum, it is viewed from the levels of context, semantics itself, and lexicogrammar. Figure 1 illustrates this "trinocular" analysis of semantics in language as a tri-stratal system diagrammatically.
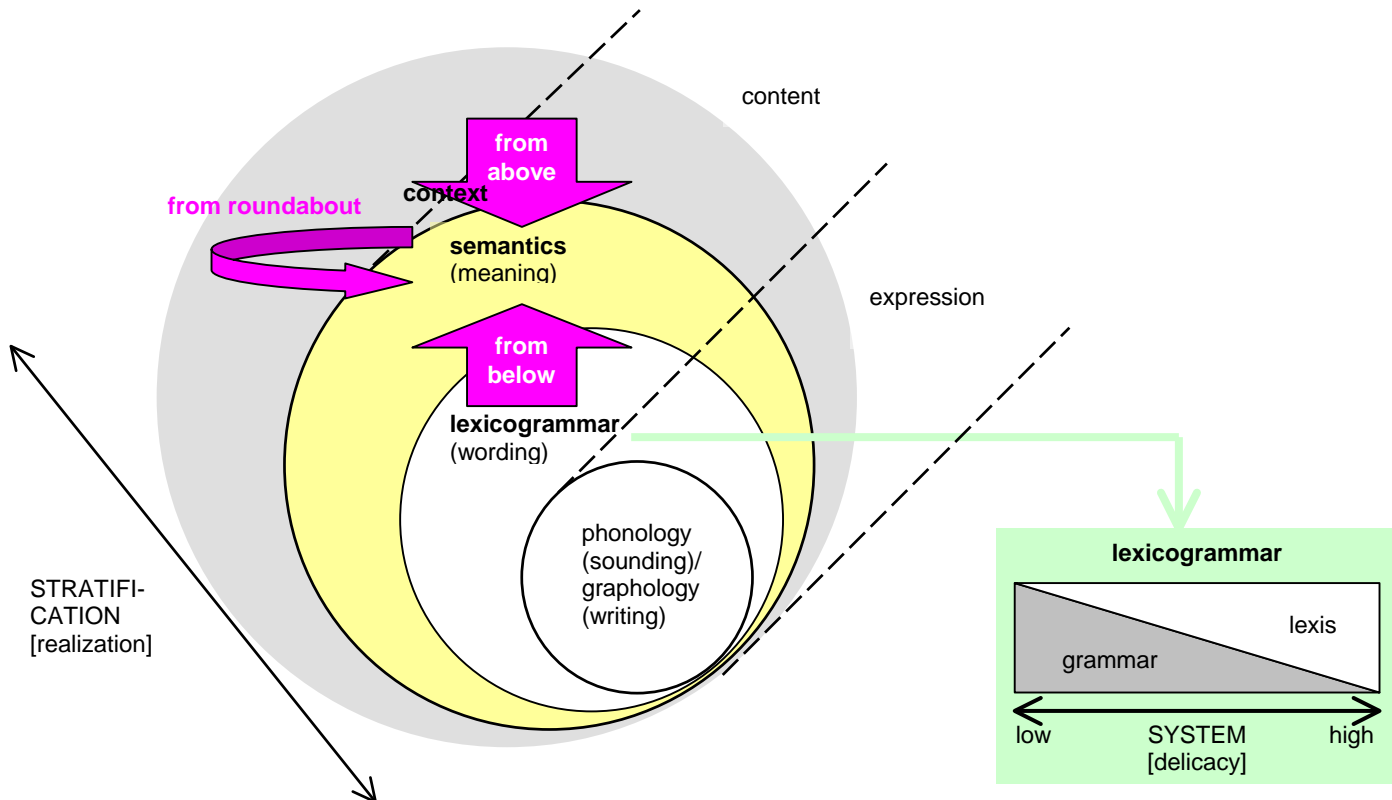


*Figure 1: "Trinocular" analysis of semantics in language as a tri-stratal system (based on Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999)*

Since a language is a stratified system with realizational relationship between each stratum, trinocular view is crucial in its coding process (Halliday, 1979: 57). For example, if the view "from below" – the view from lexicogrammar – is absent, the system does not distinguish a grammatical choice that construes a different meaning according to the systemic environment where it operates. This is because a systemic choice is not described as a structural organization in lexicogrammar, therefore, the system network unable to show how the system is related

to other area of language. What this means is that a language is not organised as "a resource for making meaning" (Halliday, 1978).

## 3.2. A text-based and corpus-based approach

As mentioned above, the dispersed realization of appraisal in the lexicogrammar is a challenge for modelling appraisal meanings. This dispersal occurs because the interpersonal mode of realization is 'prosody' (cf. Halliday, 1979; Martin, 1992; Matthiessen, 1988, 1995, in press-a). This manifestation of the prosodic mode of realization is attributable to the conventional representation for the three structural strands of metafunctional analysis (Matthiessen, in press-a: 66). What this means is this: when we describe a grammatical choice in a syntagmatic organization, all the mode of expression has been represented with constituency that is for the experiential mode of realization; as a result, the interpersonal metafunction appears dispersed in the clause rank.

Instead, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: Ch. 10) suggest that we need to shift our vantage point from lexicogrammar to semantics along the hierarchy of stratification. Whereas a clause is the upper bound of the stratum of lexicogrammar, a text is the upper bound of the stratum of semantics. Thus, when viewing the text "from above" – from the vantage point of semantics, we can identify repeated patterns as "motifs of meaning" in the lexicogrammar. This means that the realization patterning of meaning within lexicogrammar is based on instantiation rather than composition (ibid); and the unit where semantic system realizes varies according to register (Martin & Matthiessen, 1991: 588; Matthiessen, in press-a: 67). In fact, some semantic units are manifested not by a single grammatical unit but ranging over several domains "transgrammatically". For instance, a projecting verbal clause is selected as a recurrent pattern in a news report in English (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: Ch. 10). Now let's look at the examples:

[1]    **projection    nexuses    (reporting)    –    logical: INTERDEPENDENCY**
        ||| A South Korean official, <<who asked not to be named>>, *said*
        || the North's statement was most likely an attempt [[to win concessions from the US before talks resumed]]. ||| (Text E1)

[2]    **mental Process – experiential: PROCESS TYPE**
        ||| Some sections of the American strategic establishment *believe* ||
        Pyongyang already had one or two nuclear devices before 1994. |||
        (Text E1)

[3]     **ideational metaphor – ideational**
        **verbal Process – experiential: PROCESS TYPE**
    ||| *In a surprising admission*, North Korea's hard-line Communist government *declared* publicly today for the first time || that it has nuclear weapons. ||| (Text E1)

As can be seen above, while each of the examples manifests within different grammatical domains respectively, they all construe projection. The ideational grammatical metaphor in the example [3] can be unpacked as the following set of examples in order to bring out 'projection' as a pattern of meaning.  Their meanings are not the same but metaphorically agnate with [3]:

[3-1]    **modal Adjunct – interpersonal: MODAL ASSESSMENT**
    ||| '*Surprisingly*, North Korea's hard-line Communist government admitted…' |||

[3-2]    **relational clause – ideational: PROCESS TYPE**
    ||| '*It is surprising* [[that North Korea admitted…]].' |||

[3-3]    **interpersonal metaphor – interpersonal**
    ||| **'***I think it is surprising* [[that North Korea admitted…]].' |||

Now I will explain the reason that this study employs a text-based and corpus-based approach in order to model the domain in question.  It is text-based because recurrent motifs vary according to register (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).  Along the cline of instantiation, the instances repeatedly manifest in the texts are modelled as registerial patterns and they will become generalized as system.  In the course of modelling, the frequency that a specific pattern of systemic relationship occurs is profiled as probability of the occurrence through corpus-based approach, which is already proven as valid for the investigation of the grammar and the semantics as demonstrated in Matthiessen (1995) and that of clause complexes by Nesbitt & Plum (1988).

## 3.3.    Grading agnation

We have seen that through trinocular perspective we can describe and model the APPRAISAL network by relating other features more detail than simply by analysing it form the same level – the level of semantics itself.  This typological approach is effective to analyse how the set of realization is semantically the same as well as grammatically different (Martin & Matthiessen, 1991: 365-366).  The differences in grammar are presented above.  Now, the question is how the meaning embodied in the

agnate set of patterns can be differentiated.  The answer is that each metafunctional organization – textual, interpersonal, and ideational – explains the differences independently (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 597).  Table 1 shows the difference among the agnate set from the interpersonal point of view as an example.

| [3] | *In a surprising admission* | prepositional phrase | an inarguable form of assessment |
| [3-1] | *'Surprisingly'* | a modal Adjunct | orientation implicit |
| [3-2] | *'It is surprising'* | relational: intensive: attributive | explicit objective orientation |
| [3-3] | *'I think it is surprising'* | interpersonal grammatical metaphor | explicit subjective orientation |

Martin and Matthiessen (1991) also maintain that since these agnate patterns are shade into each other, there is a need for topological perspective in complementing with this typological perspective in order to describe proximity and similarity of a given group.

## 4.  Conclusion

The present paper proposes an approach for profiling and modelling the semantic system of APPRAISAL that construes a part of reporter voice occurring within the register of hard news reporting.  It suggests how to describe a given area of language by means of trinocular perspective, shunting across along any global dimensions in the multidimensional semiotic space.   The dispersed manifestation of the interpersonal realization can be profiled as motifs of meaning from the vantage point of semantics.  It also suggests that each metafunctional organization has significant role on teasing out the semantic distinction among agnate patterns.

The research will be able to contribute in the following areas.  Firstly, the quantitatively profiled description of lexicogrammar that explains the semantic system of APPRAISAL will enable us to consolidate the fact that the semantic system in general can be explained by the account of lexicogrammar, as suggested by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004). Secondly, this is the first attempt to profile the text type of news report written in Japanese lexicogrammatically.   Through the text-based comparative study between English and Japanese, the understanding of the interpersonal grammar in Japanese will be advanced further. Although the examples given here are only patterns in English, it is

expected that this framework is applicable to explore other languages than English, other text types, and other interpersonal semantic domains.

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[i] The framework of this paper has been developed based on my MA Thesis submitted in August 2005 and my presentation at Division of Linguistics & Psychology Postgraduate Research Festival held at Macquarie University in December 2005.

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[ii] In this case, there is an extra view "from below": the view from one further level below lexicogrammar, that is, the view from phonology (if the text is spoken mode) or graphology (if the text is written mode).