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厦 门 大 学
博 士 学 位 论 文

Packet Nouns and Information

Packaging in Discourse

包装名词与语篇信息包装

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Abstract

This dissertation proposes a new notion “packet nouns”. Such nouns include *claim*, *idea*, *observation*, *problem*, *question* and so forth. Their function is to package a discourse segment such as events (including actions, processes and states of affairs), abstract relations (including facts, ideas and utterances), or what events and abstract relations bring about or imply. This linguistic phenomenon is called information packaging. Packet nouns and information packaging resemble the packaging act in the real life, which indicates that packaging in language has its experiential foundation. Packaging is pervasive in the daily life. In order to protect and carry goods, and promote the sale, we usually pack the goods properly. Moreover, packaging requires a series of technical and artistic handling. In this sense, to package is to disguise. This cognitive feature can be mirrored in language structure. That is to say, in discourse there is a large amount of chunked and complex information which needs to be re-expressed or predicted. However, due to the limited capacity of memory, such information cannot be re-mentioned linearly, and thus has to be packaged by packet nouns. A discourse segment can be packaged from different perspectives. The result is that some true information may be disguised. Furthermore, to package is to categorize and segment the goods. Therefore, discourse is characterized by the categorization and generic staging in structure and content. Accordingly, this dissertation argues that information packaging reveals the iconicity between discourse and reality, which means that linguistic structure to a large extent reflects the human’s cognitive structures.

The emergence of packet nouns shows the operation of self-organizing system in discourse. It constantly produces a new generic variation and structure, accordingly, increasing the discourse information. Information

packaging is the interaction between the discourse self-organizing system and its external environment, which not only economizes the mental energy, but also reduces the redundant information. Consequently, it keeps the balance and harmony of the discourse structure. This illustrates that the syntax of a language comes about largely as a response to discourse pressure to optimize information flow.

Though information packaging is pervasive in discourse, it is only regarded as a cohesive device. In fact, it is the actualization of economy principle and the perspectival constraint on categorization when the humans handle complex information. It is more than a pure linguistic phenomenon, but an efficient way of cognition and thinking. In this sense, it is theoretically rewarding to put forward the two concepts of packet nouns and information packaging.

In this light, this dissertation is both theoretically and practically oriented. Theoretically, under the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, it probes into the semantic relationship between packet nouns and their packaged stretches of discourse, and as a result, establishes the hypothesis that packaging may occur at all strata of language. Practically, it focuses on three aspects, namely the cognitive status of packet nouns in the readers' mind, the generic features of packaging, and packet nouns in news reports.

More specifically, because information packaging is concerned with information structure and information flow, and also because packet nouns belong to the category of abstract nouns, this dissertation begins with the literature reviews of information structure and abstract nouns. The previous studies of information structure ignore the manner of transmission in discourse when the information is too complex and overloading. Meanwhile, the traditional studies of abstract nouns only center on their lexical or syntactic meanings, and textual cohesive functions. This dissertation

proposes the new concept of packet nouns, and bridges the gap between the two researches of information structure and abstract nouns with information packaging. The idea of information packaging is theoretically supported by many areas, such as information technology, cognitive science, the language study proper and even the real life. The grammatical patterns of information packaging fall into four types, namely packet nouns, discourse deixis, document packaging, ad hoc conceptual packaging and so forth, among which packet nouns are the main target of the present study. The uses of these patterns are motivated. Iconicity and economy principle are the two major motivations.

This dissertation, based on the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics in terms of grammatical metaphor, modality and projection, argues that information packaging is a higher level of grammatical metaphor, because it is the metaphorical rankshift from the highest rank of discourse to the lower rank of nominal group. Modal elements are pervasive in any discourse, which makes possible the variety and subjectivity of the same discourse packaging. Projection is the grammatical means for the meaning extension of packet nouns, and the projecting scope is the semantic scope of packaging. With such a semantic analysis, this dissertation aims to establish a theoretical model of information packaging, that is, packaging may occur at all the strata of language, namely graphology, phonology, lexicogrammar, semantics, pragmatics, genre and ideology. The variety of the packaging strata reflects the degrees of the writer's involvement in discourse content and the perspectivization in packaging.

The above hypothesis is partially testified in the practical research. First, the study of cognitive status of packet nouns proves that the readers' decoding of the packaged discourse is not the same as the encoding of the writer and that packaging is characterized by a cline of categorization. Second, this dissertation examines the generic differences in packaging

among four genres, namely dialogues in the drama, speeches, news reports and legal texts. The results indicate that some packet words only frequently occur in certain genres, and that packaging has a quantitative difference in genres. These findings imply that there is a difference in cognitive manners and also priority over packet words when human beings deal with complex information. Different communicative purposes and different degrees of information complexity require corresponding packaging styles. Finally, the case study of packet nouns in news reports tests out the perspectival constraint on packaging. Because the reporter holds the power of discourse, when he is engaged into others' utterance he may enhance certain information to show his authoritative status, or suppress other utterance content to avoid responsibility.

Key words: packet nouns; information packaging; perspective

摘 要

本文提出包装名词这一新概念。这类名词包括 *claim*、*idea*、*observation*、*problem*、*question* 等，其功能是将事件（包括行为、过程、状态）、抽象关系（包括事实、观点、言语）以及这些事件和抽象关系所隐含的言外之意等语篇语段打包。本论文把这种现象称为语篇信息包装。包装名词和信息包装象似于现实生活中的包装行为，这说明了语言中的包装有其经验基础。包装在现实生活中无处不在。为了保护产品、方便储运以及促进销售，我们常常将产品包装好。另外，包装要求做一系列技术和艺术处理，因此包装就是伪装。这种认知特征会映射到语言结构中，也就是说，语篇中大量块状、复杂的信息需要再次提及或预先提示，但由于大脑记忆的局限性不能线性地再现，因而要用包装名词把这类信息包装。一个语段可从不同的角度包装，其结果是某些真实信息可能会被掩盖。再者，由于包装意味着把物品分类和分界，因此语篇结构和内容也就有范畴化和语类阶。由此，本文认为信息包装揭示了语篇与现实世界的象似性，即语言结构在很大程度上反映了人类的认知结构。

包装名词的“突现”展示了语篇自组织系统的运作，“突现”会不断产生新的语类变异和结构，从而使语篇的信息量不断提高。信息包装是语篇自组织系统与外在语篇环境相互作用的结果，既节省了脑力，又减少了冗余信息，从而保持着语篇结构的平衡与和谐，这说明了一种语言的句法一定程度上要对优化语篇信息流的压力做出回应。

尽管信息包装在语篇中很普遍，但却只被看作是一种衔接手段。实际上，它是人类处理复杂信息时经济性原则和范畴化的视角制约的体现。信息包装不只是一种单纯的语言现象，而是一种有效的认知和思维方式，所以提出包装名词和信息包装这两个概念有其理论意义。

基于上述观点，本论文从理论和实证两方面展开分析。本论文在理论上以系统功能语言学为理论框架，探讨了包装名词与被包装语篇之间的语义关系，从而建立了包装可发生在语言各个层次的假设。实证研究主要围绕三个方面展开，即分析读者对包装名词的认知状态、包装的语类特征以及新闻报道中的包装名词。

具体地说，由于信息包装涉及信息结构和信息流，也因为包装名词属于抽象名词范畴，所以本论文首先对信息结构和抽象名词的研究做了文献综述。过去对信息结构的研究忽视了当语篇中信息复杂庞大时的传递方式，而抽象名词的传统研究只集中于其词汇、句法意义以及语篇照应功能。本论文提出包装名词这一概念，并用信息包装把信息结构和抽象名词这两项研究自然架接。信息包装这一概念可从许多领域找到理论依据，如信息技术、认知科学、语言研究本身乃至现实生活，信息包装的语法型式可归纳为四大类，即包装名词、语篇指示语、文献包装和特殊概念包装等，其中包装名词是本文的主要研究对象。这些型式的使用是有理据的，象似性和经济原则为两大主要动因。

本论文基于系统功能语言学的语法隐喻、情态和投射理论，提出信息包装是更高层次上的语法隐喻，因为它是从最高层的语篇到较低层的名词短语的隐喻性级转移，情态成分在语篇中普遍存在，这使得同一语篇包装具有多样性、主观性，投射是包装名词语义延伸的一种语法手段，投射范围就是包装所及的语义范围。通过这一语义分析，本文确立了信息包装的理论模式，即包装可发生在语言的所有层面，如：书写、音系、词汇语法、语义、语用、语类和意识形态等。包装层面的多样性反映了作者对语篇内容介入的程度和包装的视角化。

这一理论假设在实证研究中部分地得到了验证。首先，对包装名词认知状态的研究证明了读者对被包装语篇的解码与作者的编码不完全一样，包装呈现出范畴连续体的特点。其次，本文考察了包装在戏剧对话、书面演讲、新闻报道和法律语篇四大语类中的差异，其结果显示某些包装词只在某一类语篇中频频出现，而且包装在不同语类中也有量的区别，这暗示了人类在处理复杂、大宗信息时认知方式的差异以及包装词选择的优先性，交际目的和信息复杂程度的不同要求与其相对应的包装方式。最后，新闻报道中包装名词的个案研究证实了包装的视角制约性。由于新闻记者掌握了话语权，所以他在介入他人话语时，为显示其权威地位而强化某些信息，或为了避免责任而抑制其它话语内容。

关键词：包装名词；信息包装；视角

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