

An Ecological Discourse Analysis of the Report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China

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Abstract—The environmental issues are becoming more prominent nowadays, and there is a dawning realization of maintaining the harmony between men and nature. The way human think about the relationships with the nature and other organisms has shifted gradually. Meanwhile, the “ecological turn” is relatively remarkable in all aspects. As a new cross-discipline formed by the combination of ecology and linguistics, Eco-linguistics mainly studies the influence of language use on human beings, environment and other organisms. This paper chiefly uses the mode of systemic functional linguistics theory proposed by Halliday to analyze the ecological discourse of the reports of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. In order to carry out the study, the ecological philosophy (for short as ecosophy) of this paper draws from Chinese traditional philosophy and theory of sense of place. To sum up, guided by the proposed theoretical foundation, this study makes an ecological interpretation of the selected text, so that the ecological meaning expressed in discourse can be presented more intuitively by discourse researchers and reasonable evaluation of ecological value of discourse can be carried out in the further practice.

Index Terms—ecological discourse analysis, transitivity system theory, mood system theory, the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, ecological value

I. INTRODUCTION

Eco-linguistics, a burgeoning discipline formed by the combination of ecology and linguistics, has kept an upward developing trend in recent decades. Haugen mode and Halliday mode are the two main research paradigm which are generally recognized and widely applied in this field, the former focuses on the correlation between language and the context while the latter emphasizes the influence of language use on the natural environment. (He Wei, Zhang Ruijie, 2017, p.56) According to Halliday (2007), human beings recognize the world and understand the experience through language, and at the same time use language to create meaning and construct the world. The words and deeds conducted by human are determined by human themselves and their relationship with other species in the ecosystem, and even with nature. Halliday (2001) believes that language is the means of intervening society, and linguists should take the social and ecological responsibility and contribute to use language to wake up the awareness of protecting natural environment of human beings. Therefore, this study will carry out the ecological discourse analysis by applying Halliday mode, that is, to pay attention to the impact of language on ecology, in order to reveal that how our signification affects our impact on the environment.

The selected corpus of this study is the discourse about ecology of the reports of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. (Cited from http://www.gov.cn/zhuanti/2017-10/27/content_5234876.htm) First of all, this text involves momentous measures and viewpoints to promote the construction of socialist ecological civilization in the new age and new stage of China, thereby belonging to a typical ecological discourse. Then, according to the literature data searched by *China National Knowledge Infrastructure* (<http://www.cnki.net/>), the current research on this corpus is mainly concentrating in the field of non-linguistics, such as studies on party and government (Wang Huaichao, 2018, p.5), political theory (Huang Xiaohua, 2017, p.9), economic development (Chen Yongjun, 2017, p.13; Ye Qing, 2019, p.22) and so on. In the field of language and literature, it almost focuses on translation studies (Wang Dawei, Li Peiyao, 2018, p.38; Ji Zhixuan, 2018, p.53) but few are analyzed from the linguistic point of view.

In order to carry out eco-oriented analysis of discourse, we need to recognize that different researchers have their own thought of ecological harmony and consideration of the relationships between man with other organisms and the nature which can be ended up with own set of ecosophy. In this way, guided by the combination of Chinese traditional ecological philosophies and western sense of place, this study makes an ecological interpretation of the selected text from the perspective of transitivity system and mood system theory. The purpose of the study is to explore the following issues:

Firstly, what is the ecological orientation of the selected corpus in realizing experiential and interpersonal meaning? Is it consistent with the basis of ecological philosophy established in this study?

Secondly, from the perspective of transitivity system and mood system, what are the characteristics of the language construction of this ecological discourse?

Thirdly, can the analytic framework of this study provide the feasible reference for the ecological analysis of this type of discourse?

II. THEORETICAL BASIS

A. *Eco-linguistics and Ecological Discourse Analysis*

Over the past half century, more and more people have paid close attention to global ecological problems, such as the phenomenon of endangered biological species, rapid population growth, environmental pollution and destruction and so on. Based on this, Eco-linguistics, which specializes in language and ecological issues, emerges as the times require. Its task is to reveal the interaction between language and environment by studying the ecological factors of language and the relationship between language and ecology. (Huang Guowen, 2016, p.1) In short, it is a subject that combines ecology with linguistics and also an interdisciplinary field of natural science and humanities (Fill, 2001, p.44).

Ecological discourse analysis belongs to the research scope of Eco-linguistics and mainly focuses on the role of language in ecosystem. Its rise and development are closely related to the rapid development of science, technology and economy and the increasing living standard of people. If ecology is regarded as the relationship between man and other human beings, organisms and the physical environment, the role of language definitely lies in how people establish the relationship with those elements in ecosystem. (Miao Xingwei, Zhao Yun, 2018, p.42) Generally speaking, ecological discourse analysis includes the analysis of ecological discourse and the eco-oriented analysis of discourse. The former mainly focuses on ecological discourse, while the latter is the study of ecological factors in all kinds of discourse, which can be extended to the study of ecological and non-ecological factors in the language system. (Zhao Ruihua, Huang Guowen, 2017, p.585) From this point of view, the two aspects of ecological discourse analysis complement each other and should not be discussed separately.

B. *Ecosophy*

Naess (1995, p.8) put forward the term “ecological philosophy (ecosophy)”, which is used to refer to the philosophical ideas of ecological harmony, covering “a series of rules, presupposition, value respect and so on”. Accordingly, in the study of Eco-linguistics, researchers should regard ecosophy as the criterion to judge the type of discourse and guide the whole analysis process which is bound to involve the ideology and potential meaning behind it. Everyone has his own philosophical thinking and judgment criteria on everything, every event, every term in the world. In the process of ecological discourse analysis, our ecological ethics and cognition of things and events guide or affect our evaluation and identification of the objective world. At the same time, our judgments also reflect the values we hold. Therefore, in the field of Eco-linguistics, there is no universal ecological philosophy, value orientation and criteria. (Huang Guowen, Chen Yang, 2016, p.56)

Ecosophy concerns about a set of personalized philosophical system, which needs us to extract classical ideas from traditional culture and reconstruct it. (Naess, 1989, p.5-33) Chinese traditional ecological philosophy advocates the harmony between man and nature, respecting protecting and conforming to the nature. For instance, Confucian philosophy contains the ecological ethics thought based on the moral principle of human relations, such as “praise for the cultivation of heaven and earth” proposed by Confucius, “benevolence and love for the people” proposed by Mencius and so on, affecting us all along. The Taoists in the pre-Qin Dynasty and the Buddhists after Wei and Jin dynasties also advocated “the harmony between man and nature”. (Sun Jie, 2019, p.13-14) At the same time, “harmonious symbiosis between man and nature” is also the core of ecological philosophy of Chinese president Xi Jinping, which has profound ideological and cultural connotation.

In addition, the destruction of physical environment is related to the lack of ecological awareness of place for human, so that people lost attachment and respect of the place that sustain their lives. Therefore, human beings need to reconsider their position in the nature and attitude towards it. Scannell and Gifford (2010) put forward a brand new tripartite organizing framework (*Person - Place - Process*), define the ecological place view as “the emotional connection, cognitive experience and intentional behavior produced by individual or group towards the physical and the social place where they survive”.

He Wei and Zhang Ruijie (2017, p.57) expanded this theory from an ecological perspective (ESOP, hereafter) and hold that Scannell’s sense of place system ignores the existence of the non-human living body which is obviously an important part of the ecosystem. They put forward a relatively specific evaluation criterion: when people hold affection, similarity and proximity towards place, the three coexist to form beneficial ESOP; indifference, zero cognition and non-action attitude coexist to form an ambivalent ESOP; while dislike, differentiation and alienation coexist to form a destructive ESOP. Different ways of ecological behavior are caused by different types of ESOP. Positive ideology usually stimulates positive behavior, negative ideology usually leads to negative behavior, while the behavior caused by fuzzy consciousness is uncertain. (He Wei and Zhang Ruijie, 2017, p.58) In a word, this paper takes the thought of “harmony between man and nature” as the core idea and ESOP as the concrete criterion.

C. *Systemic Functional Linguistics*

As mentioned above, nowadays, the study of Eco-linguistics is divided into two models, one is the Haugen mode which pays attention to the relationship between language and the context, and the other is the Halliday mode which

emphasizes the influence of language on the living environment. Halliday (2009, p.61) has repeated that systemic functional linguistics is a problem-oriented theory designed to solve language-related problems. As Halliday (2007, p.273) emphasizes that language is the way of interfering in society and politics, which has always been an important intention of systemic functional linguistics study. Both the language problems in ecology and the ecological problems in language can be solved by this theory. Therefore, systemic functional linguistics will provide a powerful analytical tool for ecological discourse analysis. (Xin Zhiying, Huang Guowen, 2013, p.10)

Halliday points out that the process of reflecting and constructing the objective world with linguistic symbols is also the process of understanding it. As a general linguistics, the ultimate goal of systemic functional linguistics is to achieve universal description of meaning. Indeed, the meaning of systemic functional linguistics consists of four dimensions: experiential meaning, logical meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. (He Wei, Wei Rong, 2017, p.599-600)

Specifically, the theory of systemic functional linguistics and related subsystem (such as transitivity theory, modality theory, evaluation theory, etc.) have been integrated into EDA practice: based on the theory of systemic functional linguistics, a transitivity analysis model reflecting the characteristics of international ecological discourse is constructed by He Wei and Wei Rong (2017); Zhao Ruihua(2016) investigates the construction of the identification of nonhuman animals from three dimensions (register, semantics and lexicon- grammatics) from a systemic functional perspective by establishing a case study on the ecological assessment reports of silver hake; Huang Guowen (2018) makes an ecological analysis of Emily Dickinson's poetry within the framework of systemic functional linguistics, mainly from the angle of meta-function and grammatical metaphor. Therefore, choosing transitivity system and mood system, this study aims to reveal the ecological consciousness of discourse transmission more scientifically from the perspective of systematic functional linguistics, in order to improve people's awareness of ecological protection and optimize their ecological protection behavior.

III. ECOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CORPUS

In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Chinese president Xi Jinping put forward that the thought of "harmonious symbiosis between man and nature" is not only rooted in Chinese traditional ecological philosophy, absorbs its essence, but also endows the cultural connotation of the new era. Hence, based on the theory of systemic functional linguistics and ESOP, this study makes a discourse analysis of the ecological text in the report. The selected text can be divided into two parts: the first part mainly includes the review and summary of Chinese ecological civilization construction in the past five years; the second part deals with the basic thought and plan of the construction of the socialism ecological civilization with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era.

In this paper, the transitivity and mood system of these two parts are analyzed from the ecological point of view: in the first step, the process types and participant roles are marked and counted in the process of transitivity analysis; then, in the process of mood analysis, mood and sentence types are handled in the same way; finally, the ecological interpretation of the example sentence is carried out to judge the ecological orientation of the discourse.

A. *Transitivity System*

According to Halliday (1994), each clause grammatically has three meta- functions at the same time: we use language to describe our experience of the world, to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships and organizational discourse. These three functions can express different meanings, namely conceptual meaning (can be further divided into logical meaning and experiential meaning), interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. Then, Halliday set up a process-centered framework for understanding transitivity system which serves for the experiential meaning: it consists of three parts-the process itself, the participants in the process and the environmental role related to the process. (He Wei, Wei Rong, 2016, p.4) Drawn lessons from the theory of Halliday, He Wei et al.(2016) interpret the experiential meaning of human beings as seven processes: action process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, communicative process, existential process and meteorological process.

1. **The Ecological Analysis of the First Part of the Discourse**

The first part of the report summarizes the remarkable achievements made in the construction of ecological civilization of China in the past five years. There are totally fifteen clauses which only involves two types of process - ten action processes and five relational processes. First of all, action process is one of the most important types in transitivity system, because the physical nature is the most essential characteristic of the real world, and human activities are the fundamental guarantee of their existence. (Hu Zhuanglin, 1994, p.30) Halliday (1994) defines such process as material process. This process is used to describe the process of doing something or the process of something happening and can describe physical realm of experience and are mainly used to reflect substantive actions, such as *jump, drink, lift*, etc. Otherwise, the process which reflecting the field of social communication and being used to embody the process of abstract action also belongs to this category, such as *employ, increase, abuse*, etc. The action process involves many kinds of participant roles, including *Agent, Affected, Created, Range, Manner, Degree, Direction* and other compound participant roles. (He Wei. et.al., 2017, p.36) We can deepen our understanding of the linguistic embodiment of ecological philosophy in the clauses describing the process of action through the following examples:

A. 能源资源消耗强度 [Af] 大幅下降 [Pro]。

Nengyuan Ziyuan Xiaohao Qiangdu Dafu Xiajiang.

The intensity of energy consumption has dropped sharply.

- B. 重大生态保护和修复工程 [Af] 进展 [Pro] 顺利 [PrEx]。

Zhongda Shengtai Baohu He Xiufu Gongcheng Jinzhan Shunli.

Major ecological protection and restoration projects are progressing smoothly.

- C. [Ag] 大力度推进 [Pro] 生态文明建设 [Af]。

Da Lidu Tuijin Shengtai Wenming Jianshe.

Make great efforts to promote the construction of ecological civilization.

The above examples describe the concrete actions and remarkable results taken in China in the past five years to protect the environment. The subjects are nouns related to environmental protection, indicating that Chinese people make intentional behavior in protection of the environment we live by and actively take measures to promote the construction of ecological civilization and ecological protection, all of which belong to the beneficial ecological discourse. It is worth noting here that the tag of *PrEx* appears in example B, which is often referred as the process extension component that appears when the individual clause process is not enough to express the complete action semantics. As the term suggests, it is the extension and supplement of clause process, which is used to assist the process component to complete the expression of meaning and undertake the semantic function in transitivity analysis. Definitely, the lack of this component may lead to misunderstanding of the meaning of clause. (He Wei. et.al., 2017, p.39) Just like “重大生态保护和修复工作进展” is meaningless, only by adding process extension “顺利” can express accurate and complete meaning.

Then, according to Halliday (1994, p.119), relational process mainly refers to a relationship established between two independent entities. As for Chinese transitivity system, He Wei. et.al. (2017, p.97) deem that this kind of process type is composed of attributive process, identifying process, locational process, directional process, possessive process and cor-relational process. The relational process clauses that appear in this section all concern about and describe attributive process, so we'll cover this type in detail. This process describes an entity as a member of a group or loaded with a characteristic. Therefore, in this kind of process, the *Attribute* is also regarded as the participant role with certain characteristics. In most cases especially in this discourse, the semantic configuration of this process type mainly appears in the form of Ca+Pro+At and Af-Ca+Pro+At. Take some examples:

- D. 环境状况 [Af-Ca] 得 [Pro] 到 [PrEx] 改善 [At]。

Huanjing Qingkuang Dedao Gaishan.

The environmental situation has improved.

- E. ([Ag-Ca]) 成 [Pro] 为 [PrEx] 全球生态文明建设的重要参与者、贡献者、引领者 [At]。

Chengwei Shengtai Wenming Jianshe De Zhongyao Canyu Zhe, Gongxian Zhe,

Yinling Zhe.

Become an important participant, contributor and leader in the construction of the global ecological civilization.

These two examples show the positive changes that have taken place in the ecological environment of China. Therefore, China has not only made intentional behavior in the protection of the nature, but also achieved considerable environmental results. Furthermore, the clause E deals with *covert participants* which is proposed by Fawcett at first. He has set 17 simple and 12 compound participant roles in transitivity system, which solves the problem that the participant role cannot be determined due to ambiguity semantic meaning. (He Wei. et.al., 2017, p.21) For instance, the *Agent* of clause E must be China, at the same time, China is also the *Carrier* which may possess a new identity of being “an important participant, contributor and leader in the construction of the global ecological civilization”.

2. The Ecological Analysis of the Second Part of the Discourse

This part introduces the basic strategy of socialist ecological civilization construction with Chinese characteristics, puts forward the idea of harmonious symbiosis between man and nature and the basic strategy of ecological civilization construction, and calls on people to contribute to the protection of the environment. There are totally ninety clauses including eighty action processes, six mental processes and four relational processes in this part. We will analyze the structural characteristics and ecological meaning of the three process types of clauses by example sentences successively:

- F. ([Ag]) 推进 [Pro] 绿色发展 [Af]。

Tuijin Luse Fazhan.

Promote green development.

- G. ([Ag]) 构建 [Pro] 市场导向的绿色技术创新体系 [Cre]。

Goujian Shichang Daoxiang De Luse Jishu Chuangxin Tixi.

Construct market-oriented green technological innovation system.

- H. ([Ag]) 建立 [Pro] 以国家公园为主体的自然保护地体系 [Cre]。

Jianli Yi Guojia Gongyuan Wei Zhuti De Ziran Baohu Di Tixi.

Establish natural conservation land system with national park as the main body.

The above examples are all action process clauses. Nevertheless, clause G and H differentiate from clause F in their

semantic configuration (Ag+Pro+Cre) and participant roles. Such clauses reflect creative processes in which the *Affected* is usually the *Created* and the initiator of the process is the *Agent*, and sometimes *Agent* may be a covert participant. All in all, these action processes put forward specific measures to protect the environment, in order to call on people to take intentional behavior, jointly protect the environment, and achieve the ecological goal in the next five years.

I. ([Ag-Cog]) 坚持 [Pro] 人与自然和谐共生 [Ph].

Jianchi Ren Yu Ziran Hexie Gongshen.

Insist on harmonious symbiosis between man and nature

J. ([Ag-Cog]) 必须树立 [Pro] 和践行 [Pro] 绿水青山就是金山银山的理念[Ph].

Bixu Shuli He Jianxing Lushui Qingshan Jiushi Jinshan Yinshan De Linian.

We must establish and practice the idea that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets.

A new type of process has emerged in this section: the mental process describes the process of the occurrence and development of psychological activities of people, and it is the reaction of the human brain to reality. Four kinds of mental processes are embodied in this category, namely emotive process, desiderative process, perceptive process and cognitive process. (He Wei. et.al., 2017, p.67) All the mental processes appeared in this paper are cognitive processes, and their semantic configuration structures are as follows: (Ag-Cog) + Pro+Ph. This kind of process describes the human understanding of the world through the formation of concepts, perception, judgment or imagination and other psychological activities. (He Wei. et.al., 2017, p.87) The application of this process may highlight the subjective initiative of the cognitive subject and indicates the tendency of the subject to move. At the same time, it is a changing process of the subject's cognition of ecological environmental protection, which indicates that the subject is gradually aware of the importance of the construction of ecological civilization, which emphasize the determination of the state to protect the nature.

K. 我们要建设的现代化 [Tk] 是 [Pro] 人与自然和谐共生的现代化 [VI].

Women Yao Jianshe De Xiandai Hua Shi Ren Yu Ziran Hexie Gongsheng De

Xiandai Hua.

The modernization we want to build is the modernization of harmonious symbiosis between man and nature.

The relational process clauses in this section belong to the identifying category. This process type reflects the relationship between two participants to identify one participant through the identity of another participant. (He Wei. et.al., 2017, p.104) Before the process component “是(is)”, *Token*, the external form of things, which is concrete and specific. The *Value* which appears after the process component is the nature and function of things, which is macro and abstract. By constructing the identification relationship between “the modernization we want to build” and “the modernization of harmonious symbiosis between man and nature”, this clause reveals the significance of harmonious ecosophy for modernization construction, and embodies the pro-ecological thought of the author.

B. Mood System

Halliday (1994) holds that interpersonal function which embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations is mainly reflected by mood and modality subsystems. He points out that there are four primary functions in verbal communication: offer, command, statement and question. In general, the statement is embodied by the declarative mood, the question by the interrogative mood, the order by the imperative mood, and the offer by a variety of mood. (Zhang Ruijie, He Wei, 2018, p.102)

The selected report only involves imperative mood and declarative mood, whose proportion is 20% and 80% respectively. The declarative mood realizes the declarative speech function, and the imperative mood mainly realizes the verbal function of command. In addition to the objective situation, the full text is inclined to pass on a order to the reader. However, in most cases, the speech function at the semantic level and the mood category at the lexical and grammatical level are not one-to-one correspondence. (Zhang Ruijie, He Wei, 2018, p.103) For example, declarative mood can appear in the form of interrogative sentence, declarative sentence and imperative sentence at the grammatical level, but the degree of mood is different, that is, ecological mood intensity are enhanced in the order of interrogative sentences, declarative sentences and imperative sentences. Consequently, it is necessary for us to further classify and count the syntactic forms of the discourse. According to the data, among the overall forty sentences, ten imperative sentences, two exclamatory sentences and twenty-eight declarative sentences is shown. To sum up, declarative sentence which is used to express commands, requirements, and prohibitions takes the highest proportion of all and is the main syntactic form of command mood, which produces the strongest mood in the system. For instance:

L. 改革生态环境监管体制。 (imperative mood, imperative sentence)

Gaige Shengtai Huanjing Jianguan Tizhi.

Reform supervision system of environment.

M. 坚决制止和惩处破坏生态环境行为。 (imperative mood, imperative sentence)

Jianjue Zhizhi He Chengchu Pohuai Shengtai Huanjing Xingwei.

Restrain and punish acts of destroying the environment.

Both these two clauses are typical imperative sentences and definitely generate imperative mood. Due to express the relevant specific measures and policies for the protection of the environment, it conveys the obligation for Chinese

people to pay attention to the ecology and the construction of ecological civilization. In addition, He Wei (2018, p.103) believes that the study of mood system of discourse from the perspective of Eco-linguistics should not be limited to the types of mood, but also focus on the social status and social responsibility of speaker. This report is proposed by the supreme leader of China on behalf of the Chinese government. Undoubtedly, national authority has the strongest command and the greatest executive force in substance, and the declarative mood has the same effect. When the two are combined, the strongest tone is generated. Hence, the state authority formulates the environmental protection policy through laws and regulations, which can no doubt maximize the production of ecological protection behavior

IV. CONCLUSION

It is found that the selected ecological discourse highlights the importance of the construction of ecological civilization through the application of transitivity system. Broadly speaking, it confirms the measures and behaviors of environmental protection, which is helpful to establish a positive emotional connection between man and nature, assimilation of cognition and tendency of intentional behavior. Therefore, the experiential meaning expressed in this text is consistent with the harmonious ecological sense of place, and conveys the positive ecological significance so that belongs to beneficial ecological discourse. From another angle, this text consists of a large number of imperative sentences to express imperative mood, realize the verbal function of command, convey orders, demand and call on people to take action to jointly protect the environment. Moreover, the speaker of the text is on the behalf of government agency, which has absolute authority in execution, and the combination of the two produces the strongest mood. The combination of positive ecological meaning and strong mood in this text maximizes the occurrence of ecological protection behavior and conveys more positive ecological protection meaning. In a word, transitivity system and ecological mood system are practical and operable in ecological discourse analysis, and have a wide range of application value, which can provide guidance for ecological discourse analysis of different types of discourse.

APPENDIX

Citations:

Af: Affected,
 Af-Ca: Affected-Carrier,
 Ag: Agent,
 Ag-Cog: Agent-Cognizant,
 At: Attribute,
 Cre: Created,
 Tk: Token,
 Pro: Process,
 PrEX: Process Extension,
 Ph: Phenomenon,
 VI: Value.

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