THE ANALYSIS OF WARIMTE REPORTING: PATTERNS OF TRANSITIVITY

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to explore the relationship between linguistic structure and socially constructed reality. This research takes the view that the language in a certain text structures its own 'fictional' reality. In order to clarify this process, the theory of transitivity in Functional Grammar will be applied to Japanese wartime newspaper reporting; this I intend to demonstrate how an unconventional or 'deviated' world is shaped by language in response to certain social demands. This study is an attempt to examine an area where systemic grammar, pragmatics and sociolinguistics meet.

1. <u>Introduction</u>

This paper on language and politics explores the use of language for propaganda purposes during the Second World War in Japan.¹ I examine, principally from a semantico-syntactic point of view, how linguistic resources are used to systematize, transform, and sometimes mask reality. In wartime, a strong form of solidarity and control is essential as a device for unification and for maintaining a people's morale. For this purpose, mystification is utilized to reconstruct reality and obscure unwanted aspects of reality or threats to national goals. Language plays a significant role in this. Hitler proclaimed that 'revolutions are made solely by the power of the word.' To provide an analysis of the range and complexity of propagandistic language,² transitivity theory within the framework of Functional Grammar will be used to examine the wartime newspaper texts of Japan.

1. 1 'Linguistically constructed world'

My analysis of language and politics is primarily based on the idea that, as suggested by the structuralists Sapir (1956) and Whorf (1956), 'the world is linguistically constructed.' This assumption implies that language not only reflects reality, but also acts as a 'barrier' to reality, and constrains our perception of it. It follows, as a result, that language constitutes, and even manipulates, our thought and worldview. Nevertheless, it is important not to adopt an extreme version of Whorfianism or

linguistic determinism, for speakers are not so naive or uncritical as to be passively constrained by their linguistic constructions. It would also be misleading to overemphasize the role of language in perceiving reality, which can even be taken to mean that there is no world outside the self: a type of solipsism.

In the specific case of journalistic reports, however, which are the subject of this paper, it is only through language that past events are reconstructed and presented to us (Kress 1983). In this sense, 'the world is linguistically constructed' in journalism, and it follows that there are alternative ways of describing 'reality' (Burton 1982: 200). Such subjective representation of the external world is variously termed as 'projection' or 'presentation' (Halliday 1985), 'speech and thought presentation' (Leech and Short 1981) and 'discourse representation' (Volosinov 1986, Fairclough 1989). As Volosinov notes, 'journalism possesses semiotic values, has its own kind of presentation toward reality, to refract reality in its own way' (cf. Wang 1993: 560). By these means, journalists or propagandists, whether consciously or subconsciously, take advantage of linguistic resources, exploiting certain grammatical constructions or naming system to 'manipulate' people's thought and behaviour. As an example, let us look at how two British newspapers reproduced the same event so differently, based on Trew's (1979) analysis. Trew examines the following news coverage of 2 June 1975, which reported an event of civil disorder in pre-independent Zimbabwe:

<Headline>

Police Shot 11 Dead in Salisbury Riot

<Body>

Riot Police shot and killed 11 African demonstrators and wounded 15 others.....

(the *Guardian*)

<Headline>

Rioting Blacks Shot Dead by Police as ANC Leaders Meet

<Body>

Eleven Africans were shot dead and 15 wounded when Rhodesian police opened fire on a rioting crowd of about 2,000.....

(The Times)

(Trew 1979: 98)

In the first place, lexical selection in these texts clearly reflects the difference of political

stance of each newspaper; the 'African demonstrators' of the Guardian are expressed as 'rioting blacks' and 'a rioting crowd' in *The Times*. Syntactically, as well, the *Guardian* adopts active construction, thereby foregrounding the 'police' as an element directly responsible for the 'killings'. By contrast, The Times employs passive constructions, thereby placing 'rioting blacks' in a prominent position while backgrounding the 'police' (the cause of killings) in a less focal position. In addition, the causal transaction (who did what to whom) is more vaguely expressed in the body part of The Times. Such clear-cut constructions as 'X shot and killed Y' are not used here as in the Guardian; instead, the construction 'Y were shot dead when X opened fire' is used, thereby weakening the causal relationship between the 'firing' and the 'killings'. contends that these differences in lexical and syntactic choices result from the political orientation of each newspaper; the Guardian is more sympathetic to 'African demonstrators', The Times to the 'police'. Here, we can recognise how two different worlds are linguistically created out of the same reality. Thus, language not only reflects reality, but also manipulates reality. In wartime Japan, information sources were severely restricted and so the degree of reliance on the press as the citizens' sources of world knowledge was heavier than during any other period. People were, therefore, required to build their own reality from whatever elements they could find, especially in newspapers.

The main theme of this paper is to analyse how a certain 'world' was deliberately built up in the wartime press in Japan. Specifically, I shall look at the process by which an undesirable reality or 'defeat' was transformed and presented in the newspaper as if it had been a victory in order to avoid a breakdown of national morale. For this purpose, the concepts of *Agent*, *Patient*, and *Range* from transitivity theory of Functional Grammar are used as analytical tools.

In section 1.2, the situation of the Japanese wartime press and the social reality behind it are described. In section 2, after defining the term 'transitivity' and introducing concepts such as *Agent*, *Patient* and *Range*, I shall discuss briefly how the theory is relevant to political discourse in general and to the analysis of Japanese wartime reporting in particular. For the exemplification in section 3, I shall examine data from newspaper texts to show how these analytic tools can be used in this type if text analysis.

1.2 Wartime press censorship in Japan

The study of language and politics falls within the domain of pragmatics in the sense

that it analyses the 'relations between language and context that are grammaticalized,

or encoded in the structure of a language' (Levinson 1983: 9, original emphasis). Let us

now look at the 'context' part of social reality that is encoded in a language structure.

With the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, in fear of breakdown of morale,

a great effort was made to bar unwanted news while exaggerating and scattering

'positive' information. The Information Bureau, which controlled newspapers' editing

and management, gave orders to each newspaper office and news agency as follows:

1. Suspend the publication of news not permitted by the Imperial War

Headquarters.

2. Do not issue news disadvantageous to us.

(Genron Shoowa-shi 1958: 133)

Following the first air raids on Tokyo on 18 April 1942, The Information Bureau

introduced a more specific censorship policy on war reports. The Bureau gave the

following orders to newspaper offices. To summarise their main points:

1. Do not report casualties other than those officially announced.

2. Do not report casualties which would be likely to give tragic and pessimistic

impressions to the public.

3. Do not describe our losses in detail.

4. Do not describe victims from air raids in panic and confusion.

[.....]

7. Do not write about rumours of the arrival of the enemy planes.

8. Do not write any other thing which would be likely to benefit the enemy.

Censorship Report vol. 4

(Asahi Shinbun sha-shi, Taishoo, Shoowa, Senzen Hen: 1991: 586)

Taketora Ogata, vice-president of the Asahi Newspaper, later State Minister in charge

of the Information Bureau, declared before the Diet, that 'an active press was essential

for maintaining the fighting spirit of the people' (the Asahi, 9 Sept. 1944). This meant

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that newspaper writers even had to report defeats as if they had been victories. The newspaper publishers abided by these policies throughout the war. With the spread of the war, the army and the Information Bureau increased censorship (*Asahi Shinbun sha-shi*, *Taishoo*, *Shoowa*, *Senzen Hen*: 1991: 586-7).

Lee (1939) terms the rhetorical device of reporting 'defeat as victory' as *Card Stacking*, which is the strategy of concealing or distorting negative facts. It is one of the seven propaganda devices³ that Lee identified as persuasive techniques to gain people's compliance without logic or evidence. As its literal meaning 'arranging cards' suggests, *Card Stacking* refers to the situation in which

the persuader... selects only the evidence and arguments that build a case (even falsifies evidence and distorts the facts). Although there is a deliberate attempt to distort the available evidence or to select only that which would fit the speaker's conclusions, the 'evidence' is presented as being a fair and unbiased representation.

(Lee 1939, quoted in Devito 1986: 240)

The *Card Stacking* strategy is most vividly observed in Japanese newspapers' reports of Japanese defeats. It was one of the main factors, as far as the 'information war' was concerned, that contributed to the final defeat of Japan, misleading military and wartime leaders as well as the people in the wrong direction (Takeyama 1994: 65-67).

These are the parts of social reality that were encoded in the language as we shall see shortly. To conform to these restrictions in war reporting, what linguistic devices were used to 'distort undesirable reality'?

2. Relevance of transitivity framework in political discourse

2.1 Definition of transitivity

Halliday's transitivity theory provides a useful linguistic framework for analysing how an undesirable reality is transformed. In Halliday's terms, transitivity plays a key part in the ideational function of the clause. The ideational function of a clause is concerned with 'the transmission of ideas'; the role of the ideational function is to represent the patterns of 'experiences' or, in the broadest sense, 'processes', which

typically include 'actions or events of consciousness and relations' (1985: 53). The factors involved in this semanticization of processes in the clause are 1) the process itself, which is expressed by the verb phrase in a clause, 2) the participants in the clause, which are normally realised by the noun phrases in the clause, and 3) the *circumstances* associated with the process, which are typically expressed by adverbial phrases or prepositional phrases (101-102). Transitivity is mainly concerned with the first two elements. To put it simply, the primary principle of transitivity is how to express 'who or what does what to whom or what?' (Simpson 1993: 106). Transitivity is an important semantic concept in the analysis of the 'representation' of reality in that transitivity enables us to analyse the same event and situation in different ways. Although 'perceptually the phenomenon is all of a piece', when we represent a situation or event, subjectivity comes in because we must 'analyse it as a semantic configuration' based on our subjective point of view (Halliday 1985: 101). Thus, a writer's selection of one pattern of grammaticalization or configuration from among alternative ways has the effect of foregrounding certain meanings (process, participant) while suppressing or concealing others. So transitivity has been a useful tool in uncovering the particular mind-style or worldview encoded in the structure of a language (see Halliday 1971, Burton 1982, Kennedy 1982).

2.2 Some participant functions: *Agent*, *Patient* and *Range*

The participant functions refer to the roles of entities that are directly involved in the process: the one that does, behaves or says, together with the passive one that is done to, said to, etc. In this research, the following functions in particular will be of relevance as analytic tools: namely, *Agent*, *Patient* and *Range*. These concepts are used here with the following definitions.

Agent: the entity that performs an activity or brings about a change of state to the affected entity. Cruse (1973) further describes agentivity, which characterises 'the definable sub-set of doers', as typically involving 1) volition, 2) active energy investment in carrying out the action, 3) responsibility or 'culpability'.

Patient: an entity perceived as affected or effected by the process; literally, an element that 'suffers' or 'undergoes' the process (cf. Blake 1994: 68, Halliday 1985: 103).

Range: the element (abstract NP) that indicates the range or scope of the process (see

Halliday 1967: 58-62, Halliday 1985: 134-137 for the discussion of Range). Examples are: games in They played games, a question in He asked a question, a favour in He asked a favour, the race in He ran the race. The main function of Range NPs is to specify the extent of relevance of the process, which is insufficiently specified by the verb alone. For example, adding a question or a favour to the verb ask serves to differentiate between two different processes denoted by the verb: questioning and requesting. The Range in a material process usually occurs in clauses in which there is only one directed participant: Agent 4 only and no Patient.4 The most notable thing about *Range* NPs is that semantically, they do not refer to participants at all and always consist of inanimate, abstract NPs. However, grammatically, Range NPs are treated as if they were participants (Patients). So it is easy to confuse a Range with an 'apparent Patient' in the surface structure. The Range element cannot enter into paraphrases with do to or do with, whereas the Patient can, and it follows that a Range is a thing to which nothing is being 'done', so it does not have a resultative attribute as a Patient does (Halliday 1967: 58-59, Halliday 1985: 136). For example, in They crashed the plane, where the plane is a Patient, it can be said 'they did something with the result that the plane was crashed'. But in *They showed courage*, where *courage* is a Range, it cannot be said that 'they did something with the result some changes has happened to courage'. To put it simply, nothing actually changes as an affected participant in material reality, but it looks as if it did on the surface level. The way in which this 'grammatical manipulation' was exploited in Japanese wartime discourse will be discussed below.

2.3 Transitivity as applied to the discourse of Japanese wartime reporting

As discussed in section 1.2 on wartime censorship policy, Japanese defeats were reported in a highly distorted mode, whose rhetorical device Lee termed *Card Stacking*. It is most vividly observed in Japanese newspapers' reports of Japanese defeats. Applying Lee's ideas linguistically to Halliday's Functional Grammar, we can analyse the aforementioned participant functions, 5 *Agent, Patient* and *Range* in some examples of Japanese wartime newspaper reports, to observe the *Card Stacking* strategy.

Analysis

Agent and Patient

Even in defeats, the Japanese side is never described as the Patient, but always takes

the *Agent* position as if they were the controllers of the whole situation. Only the enemy's side takes the *Patient* role (even in victory).

Range

Naturally, nothing is gained in defeats — since the defeated one is the 'loser'. However, to maintain the discoursal coherency of agentivity (continuously doing something positively even in defeat), a transitive sentence with an 'apparent *Patient'* was called for as if the 'Japanese side did something to the enemy positively'. To construct or 'fabricate' an 'apparent *Patient'* 'linguistically out of reality in which materially it does not exist, *Range* is a useful linguistic tool since *Patient* as an independent entity and *Range* are often indistinguishable, on the surface at least (Halliday 1985: 136). My main point here is that since V + NP prototypically denotes 'process + *Patient'*, the structure 'V + *Range* NP' can be exploited to create an <u>illusion</u> that we have 'V + *Patient* NP'. A typical example of this in Japanese wartime reporting is *Kishin o nakashimuru koogun no shinzui o hakkishita*. (The Imperial army <u>displayed its spirit</u> which would make even <u>the devil cry</u>). This type of sentence appears frequently in reporting defeats in Japanese newspapers.

3. <u>Exemplification</u>

Now, let us see how these transitivity patterns are exemplified in an illustrative text. For this purpose, I use a report of the fighting on Attu Island in May 1943 from the *Asahi*, one of the leading newspapers in Japan. The Attu battle was the first major defeat admitted by the Japanese government. In it the entire Japanese garrison, numbering about 2,000 soldiers, died (Shillony 1981: 96). Interestingly, even though this was a major defeat, with the consecutive use of *Agent* and *Range*, from reading the text it does not sound as if the Japanese side was defeated. War reports of defeats followed the same discoursal pattern as this, throughout the war period in order to maintain national morale.

Note that in Japanese, a prop-drop language, a subject can be deleted, and Agent may be marked with the postposition -wa or -ga or may have no postposition at all. It is not a main concern here to go into grammatical detail about NP-wa and NP-ga, which are the so-called topic-marker and subject-marker respectively. Nevertheless, the important thing to stress is that, as in English, topic and subject NPs are typically but by no means always Agents, and that because of this there is a temptation for the

reader to interpret NPs with wa | ga agentively.

• defeat at Attu Island (May 1943)

ABBREVIATIONS

		examples
AC	accusative particle	<i>- 0</i>
COM	complementizer	- to
COP	copula	- dearu, - da, - nari, - tari
GEN	genitive morpheme	- no
NEG	negative morpheme	- nai, - nu, - zu
PASS	passive morpheme	re, rare
PERF	perfect	-ta, -ri
TP	topic particle	- wa

<Banner Headline>

(1)

The Imperial Army shows courage on Attu Island

<Headline>

(2)

Yamazaki butaichoo ra zen shoohee, soozetsu, yashuu o Yamazaki Commander others all soldiers magnificent night attack AC <u>Actor</u>

kankoo, gyokusai, teki 2 man songai 6000 kudara-zu carry out scattering of the jewel enemy $20{,}000 \text{ damage}$ 6000 go down-NEG \underline{Range} $\underline{Patient}$

Commander Yamazaki and his men venture magnificent night attack and lay down their lives, causing at least 6,000 casualties among the 20,000 enemy force.

<BODY>

(3)

Attushubibutai wa 5 gatsu 12 nichi ikoo kiwamete kon'nan-naru tooIsland May difficult Attu garrison TP 12th since quite <u>Agent</u>

jyookyoo ka ni kahee yoku yuusee-naru teki ni-taishi circumstance under in soldiers well superior enemy against Patient

kessen keezoku chuu no tokoro, 5 gatsu 29 nichi yoru bloody battle continue during GEN while May 29th night

teki shuryoku butai ni - taishi tetsutsui o kudashi saigo no against final GEN hammer AC pass-do enemy main garrison Patient 1 4 1 Range

koogun shinzui hakki ketsui -shi no 0 sen toImperial Army **GEN** spirit ACdisplay do-will COM determine -do Range

zenryoku sooretsu -naru koogeki kankoo agete seri. 0 0 all effort ACmagnificent attack ACdo-PERF raise carry out Range

The garrison on Attu Island had been continuing bloody battles against the superior enemy. On the night of 29 May, reaching a final decision to display the spirit of the Imperial Army, they made a gallant attack with might and main.

seru mono to mitomu. do-PERF fact Comp recognise

After that, the correspondence from our troops completely stopped, and the press recognised that all had laid down their lives.

(5)

Shoobyoosha ni-shite koogeki ni sanka shi-e-zaru wounded or ill persons COP-and attack to participate do-can-NEG

 $mono\ wa$ koreni sakidachi jiketsu seri. $people\ TP$ to this precede $decide\ oneself$ $do\ PERF$ Agent

Those who were wounded or sick and could not participate took their own lives preceding this final attack.

(6)

Waga shubibutai wa 2000 suuhyaku mee our garrison TP 2000 some hundreds people

ni shite butaichoo wa rikugun taisa Yamazaki Yasuyo nari. COP-and commander TP Colonel Yamazaki Yasuyo COP

Our garrison, consisting of 2,000, was led by Commander Yasuyo Yamazaki.

(7)

Teki wa tokushu yuushuu soobi no 20000 ni-shite enemy TP special superior military weapons GEN 20000 COP-and Patient

5 gatsu 28 nichi made-ni atae - taru songai 6000 o kudara-zu. May 28th until give-PERF damage 6000 AC go-down-NEG

The enemy, with superior military weapons, consisted of 20,000, and the damage we have inflicted on them by 28 May, at least 6,000.

(8)

(Correspondent Tanihagi reports)... Shubi seru zeein

defend do-PERF all [the people]

Agent

kotogotoku gyokusai shi, $kakute\,Attu\;too$ wa... consecutively scattering of the jewel do thus Attu Island TP \underline{Range}

ee'en-ni rekishi no ue-ni shirusa-reru koto to narimashi-ta... forever history GEN on mark-PASS fact Comp become-PERF

All the people who had been protecting the island laid down their lives, and thus Attu Island will remain in history as a sacred place, where the Imperial Army showed courage.

(The Asahi, 31 May 1943)

If we follow the basic principle of transitivity, 'who does what to whom', it can be concluded from this text that the Japanese side is described throughout as the Agent, and the processes are of the action type of 'intention'. The Japanese side is in control of everything they do or that happens around them. Nothing 'just happens' to them as a process 'outside their control'. In this discourse, the Agentive element always takes precedence over process. This can be observed in the sentences, as in (2) Ventured a magnificent night attack and (3) Made a gallant attack with might and main. Since Range NP always consists of an abstract NP, Range is often associated with metaphors. Examples include the sentence (1) The Imperial Army shows courage (with the connotation that it won the battles) with the same figure used in (3) and (8). The sentence (3) Saigo no tetsutsui o kudashi (passing the final decision), saigo no tetsutsui o kudasu literally means 'passing down the iron hammer' and is used metaphorically to mean 'make a final decision', comparing 'decisions' with 'hammers'. As mentioned earlier, since the Range element can easily be confused with an 'apparent Patient', it sounds as if the Japanese side did something or gained something even in their defeats. Also the negative images are effaced with euphemisms, as in for example, avoiding direct reference to 'death'. Gyokusai (lit. 'scattering of the jewel') as in sentences (2) and (4), and jiketsu (lit. 'decide by oneself', meaning 'commit suicide') leave the

impression that the soldiers chose to die and were not killed passively. Here an 'overlexicalization' strategy is at work to avoid such socially sensitive 'core words' as shiboo (die). In this way, the lexical level⁶ also functions to increase the sense of 'agentivity' or 'positivity'. These functions all contribute to an overall conceptual framework which maintains a flow of agentive rhetoric for the Japanese side. Conversely, in spite of being the victors, the enemy's side always takes the Patient position as in the sentences (2), (3) and (7). In these wartime discourses there is no instance in which defeat is openly acknowledged, unlike the following example from peacetime discourse, a report of a soccer game in the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936, in which Japan was defeated by Italy:

<Headline>

(9)

Nippon <u>haitai</u> tai Itaria shookyuusen Japan lose against Italy soccer game Patient

Japan <u>loses</u> to Italy in a soccer game

<Body>

(10)

... Waga chiimu wa zenhan $2 \cdot 0$ to koohan our team TP first-half 2 versus 0 as second-half $\underline{Patient}$

6-0 to riidosa-<u>re</u> 8 tai 0 de <u>haitaishi</u>-ta. 6 versus 0 as overtake-<u>PASS</u> 8 versus 0 at <u>lose</u>-PERF

Our team was overtaken by the Italian team with a score of 2-0 in the first half, and 8-0 in the latter half, and was defeated.

(The *Tokyo Asahi* ⁷ 8 August 1936)

Japan is clearly expressed as *Patient*; what is significant is the adopting of the passive construction with the use of the passive morpheme -re in (10) to describe themselves. This kind of linguistic realisation was not found in the wartime 'official' discourse in Japan. The reason is simply that a different social reality requires different linguistic

structures. In peacetime, the results of international encounters do not so seriously affect the course of a nation as in wartime. So there is no need to fabricate results and to deliberately construct a 'deviated world' in peacetime discourse; thus 'who does what to whom' is more clearly and directly expressed in the press in peacetime. This linguistic manifestation is the 'norm' from which a 'deviation' (wartime linguistic realisation) has diverged.

4. <u>Conclusion</u>

As proposed at the beginning, using the framework of Functional Grammar, we have seen how a 'deviated world' can be linguistically constructed. It is 'deviated' in the sense that the Japanese side is presented as actively 'shaping reality' despite the fact that they were in a 'passive' situation on the real battlefield. What the enemy did affected nothing. To conform to the aforementioned press restrictions policy, which can be termed *Card Stacking*, a 'false' reality is shaped with these linguistic devices.

Here, I have presented how the language or style or a certain text creates its own 'fictional' reality (Burton 1982: 211); i.e. how 'the most desirable' reality is constructed by language to respond to a certain social demand of a given period of time in history. This study attempted to explore the links which mediate between language structures and representations of reality. To systematize the networks that connect language structure and socially constructed reality requires a more integrative approach to semantics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics than the one I have given here, but I hope that I have at least outlined a way in which a more comprehensive analysis may be built on.

Notes

- 1. I would like to thank the following people for reviewing an earlier version of this paper and making valuable suggestions: Keith Mitchell, in particular, Phil Morrow, William Naoki Kumai and an anonymous EWPAL reviewer. My thanks also go to Susumu Oh-ishi for his help in analysing Japanese language. I alone am responsible for the shortcomings of this paper.
- 2. The definitions of propaganda vary. Lee (1939) quoted in Devito (1986: 239) characterises it as 'organised persuasion; the spreading of ideas and values through

a variety of persuasive devices'.

- 3. Lee's seven propaganda devices quoted in Devito (1986: 239-240) include 'Name Calling, Glittering Generality, Transfer, Testimonial, Plain Folks, Card Stacking and Band Wagon'.
- 4. Halliday uses the terms Actor Goal instead of Agent Patient respectively. However, in the interest of simplicity, it would be desirable to explain Range in contrast to Agent and Patient, treating these two roles, at least for my present purposes, as equivalent to Halliday's Actor Goal. Cf. 'The Agent will ... be equivalent to the Actor in goal-directed material processes' (Simpson 1993: 93).
- Palmer argues that whereas 'grammatical marking is essentially language-specific,
 ... notional or semantic characterisations are applicable to any or all languages'
 (1994: 5).
- 6. Lexis plays a significant role, as well, in signaling discourse of ideology (see, for example, Carter 1987: 92-96).
- 7. Tokyo Asahi Shinbun (Tokyo Asahi Newspaper) was renamed Asahi Shinbun in June 1941 following the amalgamation of local newspapers.

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