

A Stylistic Analysis of Literary Journalism—Based on Senior High School's English Textbook

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1 Introduction

The text I choose is from Senior High School's English textbook(PEP new edition, Book 1, Unit 4 Reading and Thinking). The reason why I choose it is that not only is it related to the news happening recently-Earthquake but also I prefer to be a senior high school's English teacher in the future. This unit mainly focuses on describing the natural disaster and most of the passages are news reports and literary journalism. All of the texts help students develop their cognitive strategies and broaden their horizons.

The earthquake happened at one time without hesitation. The picture on the textbook shows that a team of soldiers are carrying an injured survivor on a stretcher from the ruins of a collapsed building. One soldier is holding an IV(intravenous drip) to give the patient vital fluids. This disaster was the huge earthquake happened in Tangshan. There are earthquakes all over the world every day. Many are small but some are more powerful and therefore more deadly. The power of an earthquake is measured on the Richter scale. Powerful earthquakes can destroy buildings, roads, and bridges.

Literal journalism is a style between news reports and literature. Its subject matter and characters are real historical events and real characters. The biggest difference between literal journalism and ordinary news reports lies in that the former vividly describes the environment of events and the characters involved, and uses a variety of rhetorical methods to organize language, which can better stimulate the readers' emotions and move the readers. There is no common central figure in literal journalism in this whole text, but it uses several figures of speech to make the whole text persuasive, cohesive and meaningful.

2 Graphological Features

Literary journalism is a form of nonfiction that combines factual reporting with narrative techniques and stylistic strategies traditionally associated with fiction. This form of writing can also be called narrative journalism or new journalism.

Literary journalism should follow the principle of directness and reality, but it should be different

from the conciseness of news reports and the styles of literature.

First, the news reports usually consists of the headline, the lead and the body. The headline may be the general summary of the whole text, while the literary journalism may adopt the manner of eye-catching. For example, the title of this text is “The Night the Earth Didn’t Sleep”, which is eye-catching for the reason that it uses the figures of speech-personification(the earth has been personified) and parallelism(the article “the” has been emphasized twice). New report as it was, the title would be “The Report of Tangshan Earthquake”. As for the lead and the body, they are usually very short. Each paragraph consists of one or two sentences. The structure of the text presents an inverted triangle one. When it comes to the literary journalism, it uses the chronological order, just like the narrative.

Second, using some of the data in the text, it highlights and embodies the documentary characteristics of reportage and enhances the sense of directness of events. For example: Eleven kilometres directly below the city, more than 150 kilometres away, nearly one third of, eight kilometres long and 30 meters wide, two depths of the people, thousand of children, more than 400000, 75 percent, 90 percent, 150000 soldiers, more than 10000 doctors and nurses, etc. In addition, there are some time-related figures, such as: at about 3:00 a.m., less than one minute, at 3: 42 a.m., which not only accurately describe the process of the earthquake, but also create a tense atmosphere in which people have no time to breathe when a disaster occurs.

Third, almost the punctuation of the whole text is comma and period. It is obvious that apart from one exclamatory mark and one dash, the other punctuations are comma and period. For example: Strange things were happening in the countryside of northeastern Hebei. For three days the water in the village wells(井)rose and fell, rose and fell. In the farm yards, the chickens and even the pigs were too nervous to eat. Mice ran out of the fields looking for places to hide. Fish jumped out of their pools. At about 3: 00 a m, on July 28, 1976, some people saw bright lights in the sky. We can see that it just indicates the description of the process of the event without adding any emotions.

Fourth, paragraphs in the literal journalism are usually very long. Here is a summary of the quantity of the sentences in each paragraph:

Paragraph	1	2	3	4	5
Quantity of sentences	8	10	11	6	4

It is apparent that all of the paragraphs contain a lot of sentences, which includes several dense information. However, if it was a news report, it would be just one or two sentences in each paragraph, whose function is to facilitate reading.

In the each paragraph, it tells us detailed information. For example, in paragraph 1, it gives us some surroundings-water, well walls, chickens, pigs, dogs, fish, lights and so on. Be it a news report, it would just give the brief summary, liking the first sentence in paragraph 1: Strange things were happening in the countryside of northeastern Hebei.

Last but not least, this feature is the same to news report: picture plays a vital role in the whole text. Most pictures of the news report and the literal journalism may just be one, which can convey the meaning of the text and attract reader’s attention. For example, in this text, the author uses a picture of the sufferers buried in the Tangshan Earthquake to show the topic of the text: Tangshan Earthquake.

3 Lexical Features

Generally speaking, this whole text tends to use easy words for us to understand for the factor that it mainly is provided to senior high school’s students. Here is the summary of the usage of

words:

Total words	number of	Total number of syllables	Average word length	Average number of syllables	Number of complex words
545		770	4.48	1.41	39

There are 246 words in CET-4 vocabulary, which includes 210 words in the glossary of compulsory education as well as 22 words in the glossary of senior high school's English. Faced with senior high school's students, most of these words are corresponded to 3500 glossaries.

The most striking feature is the frequent use of nouns and action verbs, especially in describing the phenomena of the event. All of these words could be vivid, powerful to us readers. Moreover, all of these words don't contain some subjective feelings of the author, which could make the text sound objective.

The second feature is that there are some adverbial words or phrases of degree: several days, about 3 a.m., as if, nearly one third of, more than and so on. Tangshan Earthquake is a report so in order to avoid ambiguous. As is known to us all, on the scene of the Tangshan earthquake, it is impossible for journalists and experts to record the number of deaths and information in real time.

The third feature is that quantities of articles and prepositions has been repeated several times. For example, "the" has been repeated 36 times, "of" has been repeated 28 times, "and" has been repeated 22 times, "to" has been repeated 17 times and "in" has been repeated 11 times. As we know, prepositions have directivity, while "of" can indicate affiliation. Each of these above words can make the whole text cohesive and logical.

4 Syntactic/Grammatical Features

Generally speaking, there are different types of sentences in this whole text. For example, attributive clauses, compound sentences, accompany adverbial and exclamatory sentences. Most of them are declarative sentences for they are used to state a fact, to give information objectively and highlight the dangerous phenomenon.

As far as the length of the sentence is concerned, the average of the length of sentences is 13.49, which appears that many of the sentences are comparatively short. That's because the sentences has different subjects. For example, the subject of the first sentence is the water in the village, while the second sentence is chickens. Different subjects perform different actions, whose advantages are that the author can detailedly describe different subjects in the whole passage, making the whole text fuller.

Another syntactic feature of the text is the common use of attributive clauses. Attributive clause is considered as a syntactic process of generating another clause embedded in a noun phrase. It can add sufficient information to the modified noun phrase that the speaker expects to express. It can help us to understand relationship between the subordinate clause and the main sentences, whether they are reasons and results or conditions and results. The same is to the accompany adverbial. For example, the sentence "with strong support from the government and the tireless efforts of the city's people, a new Tangshan was built upon the earthquake ruins". We can see that "with strong support from ... people" is the reason. And "a new... ruins" is the result.

There exists different sentence structures when comparing the new edition text and the old edition text. In the new edition text, the first sentence of paragraph 4 is "But hope was not lost" while in the old edition text, the first sentence of paragraph 4 is "All hope was not lost". Different structures though they are, they have the same grammar point-partial negation for the reason that "Not all" equals to "All...not". It is distinct that this sentence is a transitional sentence, which serves

as a connecting link between the preceding and the following. The preceding tells us the negative and pessimistic situation during the earthquake, while the following argues that the bright sight after the earthquake with rescuers and survivors.

5 Semantic Features

Among the semantic features, the most distinct features are using plenty of figures of speech.

The text begins with a description of some abnormal phenomena in the countryside before the earthquake, using the rhetoric of parallelism. For example, "rose and fell" has been repeated twice. When describing the creatures, the author uses the same structure- "subject+predicate(verb)" -simple sentence structures. Moreover, the author uses some words with alliteration, such as "well and walls", "asleep and as" and so on. The author also uses some adjectives with degree, such as "deep", "nervous", especially "bright" and "loud" (comparing the time: before earthquake and the instant the earthquake happened) The language is vivid and full of picture sense. Create a tense atmosphere before major events.

Start with the second paragraph. The text focuses on depicting the amazing scenes when the great earthquake occurred, as well as the scenes of devastation and despair after the disaster. The author uses some onomatopoeia like "crack", which emphasize gives people a feeling of being on the spot. At the same time, use personification. For example, "the whole nation felt it" ("felt" should be used of person's feeling, here "nation" is personalized). Consonance has been used in the text, such as "killed and injured", "dead and injured".

The last two paragraphs of the text naturally transition to the disaster areas that are desperate but never give up hope, with the description of the people's will to survive and their determination to rebuild their homes. With the support of the state and the people's army Tangshan people rebuilt their homes on the ruins, and Tangshan, a city damaged by natural disasters, was reborn. From the perspective of rhetoric, in addition to the parallel sentences at the beginning, the text also uses the rhetoric methods such as personification, metaphor and climax that often appear in literary works, so that the article has more details and a sense of picture, such as the title "the night the earth didn't sleep" and the text "hard hills of rock because rivers of dirt." "Bricks covered the ground like red autumn leaves,..." "the city began to breathe again."

The full text is vivid and full of emotion, which reflects the author's desire to express his thoughts and feelings of disaster is merciless and people are sentimental.

6 Conclusion

The new version of the textbook is different from the old version in the compilation of this text. The new version of the textbook adds a summary of the recovery after the Tangshan earthquake (that is the last paragraph). I think this aspect of the design is better. This is in line with the main contradiction in China at this stage, that is, the longing for a better life. In the process of training high school students, it is more important for us to train them to have an optimistic and positive attitude towards life. Even if they encounter negative and pessimistic things, they also need to think in a positive direction. Just as Balzac going like this, suffering develops our extraordinary role, not to bow to the disaster, but to be strong.

There are five natural sections in the text. Taking the omen before the earthquake, the damage caused by the earthquake, the rescue after the earthquake and the reconstruction after the earthquake as the main line, it links up the reactions and feelings of people who have experienced the earthquake before, at the epicenter and after the earthquake, that is, they are unaware of the

abnormal phenomena before the earthquake, the shock and fear caused by the devastating damage caused by the earthquake, and the hope and Enlightenment brought to them by the timely rescue and the reconstruction after the earthquake.

Finally, I would like to give some suggestions on the teaching of the whole article. In the text teaching design, we should grasp the main line of earthquake, take the content, language and meaning as the guidance, help students sort out the language about earthquake topics, and taste the appeal of various rhetorical devices. Secondly, from the perspective of understanding the writing purpose of the text, we can deeply excavate the connotation of the text and further train the students' thinking. For example, the title of the text is the night the earth didn't sleep. The author does not simply take the earth as the title, but uses anthropomorphic techniques to write, which can guide the students to feel the multiple meanings carried by the title through the dual thinking of shallow understanding before reading and deep understanding after reading. In addition, the cultural element that this lesson needs to pay attention to is that disaster has no lover. Students need to think and reach a consensus. Under the reality of "the fatal disaster and the fragility of life", people can only be united to overcome the merciless disaster with a loving heart.

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