Abstract

The current thesis explores the variation of *construal* mediated through the linguistic encoding of comparable real-life situations (or *usage events* in Cognitive Linguistic terms). The comparison of construals is made across languages (when the same semantic content is expressed) and across genres (within the same language when the same pragmatic act is performed), which aims to show the range of construal operations allowed for by different sets of conventionalized linguistic tools (across languages) and by the socio-culturally-agreed conventions related to the pragmatic act (across genres).

The thesis is divided into two sections. The first section of the thesis (Publications 1-4) is a cross-linguistic approach to the construal of viewpoint in narratives, drawing on linguistic samples from English and Chinese. In particular, I compare the linguistic manifestations of narrative viewpoint and the resultant construals that are invoked by the viewpoint expressions in the two languages. The second section of the thesis (Publications 5-9) deals with the variation of cultural conceptualization in Taiwanese Mandarin and investigates the various cultural symbols that are used in the pragmatic act of offering solace, using the eulogistic idioms that are displayed at public funerals as illustration.

The research reported in the thesis has impact in the fields of Cognitive Linguistics (especially viewpoint research and metaphor research), pragmatics and anthropological linguistics. Specifically, I show that the construal of a scene constructed through the linguistic mode is restricted by the linguistic toolkit available to the users of a particular linguistic community and is, as a result, bound to be highly conventional and language-specific, as is evidenced by the findings throughout Publications 1-4. In addition, the research (in Publications 5-9) shows the role played by socio-cultural factors in shaping the construal of an event (of death), where the religion and the occupation of the deceased correlate with the types of metaphor, cultural symbol and viewing arrangement that are invoked by the eulogies.