

Vertical Recontextualization as a Tool for Understanding the Huugjilt Lawsuit Case

Presented by

Prof. Tian Hailong
Tianjin Foreign Studies University

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All are welcome.

ABSTRACT

Discourse is primarily understood as language use in various forms, but more importantly taken as social practice involving members of discourse communities that are institutionally affiliated and ideologically oriented. Discourse as social practice has been addressed in terms of for example intertextuality and interdiscursivity, which emphasizes the relatedness of discourses that interplay with one another. Following this line of research, my talk will further explore the ways in which discourses interplay vertically in the context of Chinese public communications. Drawing on Bernstein's conceptualization of "vertical discourse" and van Leeuwen's conceptualization of "recontextualization" I propose a new concept of "vertical recontextualization", and take it as a tool for understanding the Huugjilt lawsuit case, a case in which a young man was sentenced to death in the year of 1996 but found innocent in 2014. I will see how discourse plays its role in this lawsuit case so as to shed its influence on the practice of law. I will, in particular, investigate how metadiscourse is recontextualized in local discourse systems, thus regulating the practice of members of these discourse communities. In so doing I intend to unpack the complexity of social practice and highlight the role discourse plays in these social practices.

A short bio note of Hailong Tian

Hailong Tian (PhD) is professor of discourse studies at Tianjin Foreign Studies University, and serves the university as the executive editor of Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University and head of the Centre for Linguistics and Semiotics. Prof. Tian also serves as Chair for the Association of Chinese Sociolinguistics, and as Deputy Chair and General Secretary for China Association of Discourse Studies. He is currently editor of Discourse Studies Forum, Journal of Chinese Sociolinguistics, and editor-in-chief of the book series Nankai Discourse Studies. He is also on editorial board of Journal of Language and Politics (John Benjamins) and of the John Benjamins book series Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture.

The academic research of Prof. Tian concentrates on sociolinguistics and (critical) discourse analysis. He is working towards a theory that explains the interactions of discourses in the current Chinese society. He has published books, book chapters and articles in English as well as in Chinese. His latest publication includes: "Vertical Interplay of Discourses and Its Impact on a Chinese Legal Case" (in Discourse in Action, ed. by Krippendorff, in press). He worked as research fellow at Lancaster University (2006-2009), and has lectured at various universities in China as well as in England (Lancaster, Warwick), Finland (Helsinki), Australia (Sydney), Poland (Warsaw, Lodz, and Jagiellonian), and America (Penn U).

