An Analysis of the Classification System in Chinese Courtroom Discourse

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the classification resources in the audio recording transcripts of three trials in China. The findings indicate that: 1) courtroom participants with opposite goals tend to use expressions with different and even opposite meanings to classify the same things, incidents and concepts which are related to the dispute focuses, 2) courtroom participants with the same goals tend to have similar or congruent classifications of the same things, incidents and concepts involved in the cases, and 3) a prominent feature of courtroom discourse is overlexicalization, the analysis of which is conducive to our understanding of the stances, views and claims of related courtroom participants.

Key words: Courtroom Discourse; Classification; Goal; Overlexicalization

1. Introduction

Classification is the linguistic ordering of the world (Fowler et al. 1979: 210). The classification system of discourse refers to the naming and description of persons and events in discourse, realized by the choice of words. Classification is the most basic mode of cognition of human beings, "without words, our world would be a dune of experience" (Eschholz, in Xin 2005: 65). However, language is by no means an objective tool for classification. The labels that people attach to objects through language don't necessarily reflect the inherent features of the objects, but are influenced by the level of cognition and thinking of the people, so different views of objects and experience will lead to different principles of classification.

In the analysis of classification, we should pay special attention to nouns (noun phrases), verbs (verb phrases) and overlexicalization. Nouns are highly abstract; usually they classify many objects into a certain type only based on one or two common features, but in turn, all the connotative meanings of that type of objects will be endowed to each member of it. Verbs don't necessarily describe inherent features; usually the features they describe are temporary. However, verbs with similar emotional implications, if used repeatedly, will leave a deep impression on the listener. Overlexicalization is the provision of a large number of synonymous or near-synonymous terms for communication of some specialized area of experience (Fowler et al. 1979: 210-212). Through the systematic description of the classification resources used by the courtroom participants (judges, prosecutors, plaintiffs and defendants, etc.), this paper attempts to reveal the interactive relations between them and the purposes, ideas and attitudes of the courtroom participants.

2. Data Description

From May 20012 to January 2013, the author observed and audio-recorded eight trials, which resulted in audio-recordings totalling approximately 24 hours. The audio-recordings were transcribed into written form, acquiring a data set of more than 200,000 words. Of the eight trials, five were tried at Nanjing Intermediate People's Court

(NIPC) and the remaining three at Jiangning District People's Court of Nanjing (JDPC). Four of the eight trials were criminal, three were civil, and the last one was administrative.

In order for the analysis to be specific and detailed, I only focus on three of the eight trials i.e. Trial 1, Trial 6 and Trial 8. Trial 1 is a criminal trial of murder, Trial 6 is a civil trial of debt dispute, and Trial 8 is an administrative trial of occupational injury confirmation. Table 1 provides basic information about the three trials.

Table 1 General information about the three trials

Number	Type	Description	Place of Trial
T1	Criminal	Murder	NIPC
T6	Civil	Debt Dispute	NIPC
T8	Administrative	Occupational Injury Confirmation	JDPC

3. Classification system in Chinese Courtroom Discourse

3. 1 Trial 1

Trial 1 is a criminal trial of murder tried at Nanjing Intermediate People's Court (NIPC). The fact of this case is as follows: the defendant Shen (male) was a seventeen-year old boy, working as a porter in a furniture market in Nanjing before the case. The defendant rented an apartment from the victim Li (male) but left the apartment without paying the rent, so a quarrel occurred between the two parties. During the quarrel, the defendant got too angry to control his emotion. He fetched a knife and fought with Li, Fan (Li's wife) and another two men and finally killed Li. The fact of this case is quite clear: the defendant Shen killed the victim Li. But it does not mean that in the trial Shen has nothing to say in his defense. In this case, the defendant tried to prove that he didn't kill the victim on purpose and that the victim should also be responsible for the consequence. By doing so, the defendant attempted to get a comparatively light term. The following are expressions he used to describe his and the victim's behaviors in the course of the fight:

A. Expressions to describe his own behavior:

ná le yī bǎ shuǐguǒ dāo 'held a fruit knife'
zhèngcháng ná dāo de zīshì 'with normal pose of holding a knife'
méiyǒu ná dāo tǒng tā 'didn't stab him with the knife'
ná dāozi zhǐ zhe tā 'pointed at him with the knife'
yòng shǒu xiàng hòumiàn dǎng le yīxià 'impeded him with my hand to the back'
lìqì bù tài dà 'without much force'
ná dāo 'held the knife'
pǔtōng shuǐguǒ dāo 'an ordinary fruit knife'
yòng dāozi huī 'waved the knife'
wǒ de dāozi wǎng qián shēn 'I held out my knife'
ná zhe dāozi zhǐ zhe tā gēbo 'I pointed the knife at his arm'
dǎng le yīxià 'impeded him'
wǒ shì dǎng de 'I impeded'
wǒ méiyǒu zhuǎn guò liǎn tǒng 'I didn't turn back and stab him.'
dāozi méiyǒu bèi zài shēnhòu 'the knife was not held at my back'
dāozi shì ná zài qiánmiàn de 'the knife was held in front of me'
wǒ dāngshí yǐjīng wàngjì shǒu shàng yǒu dāo le 'I forgot that the knife was in my hand.'
wǒ de shǒu jiù dǎng chūqù le 'I impeded him with my hand.'
wǒ méiyǒu zhème dà de lìqì 'I didn't use so much strength.'
dāo méiyǒu tǒng zhème shēn. 'The knife didn't penetrate so deep.'

B. Expressions to describe the victim' and his party's behavior:

tāmen gǎn wǒ mǔqīn zǒu 'They drove my mother away.'
Sǐzhě de qī zǐ dòngshǒu le 'The wife of the victim also hit me.'
yǒu liǎng gè nán de chōng guòlái 'Two men rushed at me.'
cháo wǒ bózi dǎ le yīxià 'hit my neck'
tā ná zhe tuōbǎ xiàng wǒ dǎ guòlái 'He hit me with a mop.'
tāmen rén duō 'They had several people.'
tāmen zhuī wǒ, mà wǒ 'They chased and abused me.'
fángdōng lǎobǎn shànglái zhuā zhe wǒ 'The landlord came up and grabbed me.'
fángdōng lǎobǎn ná tuōbǎ zá guòlái 'The landlord hit me with the mop.'
hóng yīfú jǔ qǐ tuōbǎ xiàng wǒ zá lái 'The man in red held the mop to hit me.'
hòumiàn yǒurén dǎ wǒ 'Someone hit me from behind.'
nà shí sǐzhě shì zài wǒ bèihòu de 'The victim was behind me.'
tā zài bèihòu dǎ wǒ 'He hit me from behind.'

From the above expressions used by the defendant we can see that those expressions, especially the verbs, that he used to describe his own behavior are generally moderate words which would not arouse adverse emotions from listeners (esp. the judges), e.g. *ná* 'held', *méiyǒu ná dāo tǒng* 'didn't stab him with the knife', *zhǐ* 'pointed at', *dǎng le yīxià* 'impeded', *lìqì bù tài dà* 'without much force', *pǔtōng shuǐguǒ dāo* 'an ordinary fruit knife', *yòng dāozi huī* 'waved the knife', *shēn* 'held out', *zhǐ zhe* 'pointed at', *dǎng* 'impeded', *méiyǒu zhuǎn guò liǎn tǒng* 'didn't turn back and stab him', *bèi* 'held at my back', *wàngjì shǒu shàng yǒu dāo* 'forgot that the knife was in my hand', *dǎng chūqù le* 'impeded', *méiyǒu zhème dà de lìqì* 'didn't use so much strength', *méiyǒu tǒng zhème shēn* 'didn't penetrate so deep'. If a listener, who does not know the fact of the case, only hears these words and expressions, s/he is probably unlikely to associate the defendant's behavior with murder. However, the expressions that he used to describe the victim' and his party's behaviors seem to be aggressive, which would arouse the association of violence. For example: *dòng shǒu* 'hit me', *chōng guòlái* 'rushed at me', *dǎ le yīxià* 'hit', *xiàng wǒ dǎ guòlái* 'hit me', *rén duō* 'several people', *zhuī wǒ* 'chased me', *mà wǒ* 'abused me', *zhuā* 'grabbed', *zá* 'pounded', *dǎ* 'hit', *zài bèihòu dǎ* 'hit me from behind'. These words and expressions leave us such an impression: It was the victim and his party that provoked the conflict and bullied the defendant, or at least the defendant was forced to fight back and didn't kill the victim on purpose.
However, the expressions used by the prosecutor to describe the behaviors of the defendant and the party of the victim are quite different from those used by the defendant. See the following examples:

A. Expressions to describe the defendant:

a). Expressions to describe the defendant's behavior:

dòngshǒu 'fought'
ná dāo 'held the knife'
bá dāo xiāng jiàn 'fought with a knife'
zài nǎer dǎ de? 'Where did the fight take place?'
zěnme dǎ de? 'How did you fight with them?'
ná dāo zhuī tāmen 'chased them with the knife in your hand'
nǐ shǒuzhōng yǒu dāo xiàng hòu dǎng 'you impeded him with the knife in your hand'
dāo huì chuō dào hòumiàn de rén 'the knife was likely to stab the person behind you';
bǎ dāo wǎng tiānshàng rēng 'threw the knife into the sky'
ná dāo qù zhuī 'chased the man with the knife in your hand'
sīdǎ 'tore into each other'
yòng dāo tǒng bèihàirén 'stabbed the victim with the knife'

chí shuǐguǒ dāo zhuījí 'chased them with the fruit knife'
èn zhù 'pinned (him)'
chí dāo tǒng 'stabbed him with the knife'
yònglì měng tǒng jǐng bù yīdāo 'stabbed his neck with great force'
zhì qí sǐwáng 'caused him to die'

b). Expressions to judge the nature of the defendant's behavior:
gùyì shānghài zuì 'crime of intentional injury'
zhì rén sǐwáng 'caused death'
shānghài tārén 'wounded others'
zhǔguān gùyì 'subjective intent'

B. Expressions to describe the victim and his party:
bèi nǐ tǒng shāng bǎngzi de rén 'the man whose arm was stabbed by you'
bèi nǐ èn zài shēn xià de pàngzi 'the fat man pinned to the ground by you'
shòushāng zhùyuàn 'wounded and taken to the hospital'
bèihàirén 'the victim'
sǐzhě 'the dead'
qiǎngjiù wúxiào sǐwáng 'all rescue measures were in vain and he died'

The choice of lexical items (that is, words or phrases) to refer to events, people or situations can play an important role in influencing people's memories, perceptions, reactions and evaluations (Eades 2010: 49). From the above two sets of expressions used by the prosecutor to describe the defendant and the party of the victim we can see that: the public prosecutor holds a quite different view of the conflict and the roles played by the defendant and the party of the victim and thus tells a different 'story' (Bennett & Feldman 1981: 9). The expressions that he used show that the defendant was aggressive and killed the victim on purpose, or at least the defendant should take major responsibility for the consequence while the victim and his party were weak and passive. The style of the expressions used by the prosecutor is in accordance with his role in the court trial because in a criminal trial, the prosecutor prosecutes the defendant in the name of the government. His/her purpose is to prove that the defendant has violated the law and should be punished according to law. On the contrary, the defendant tries to prove that he hasn't infringed the rights of the plaintiff or that the degree of infringement isn't as high as is stated by the plaintiff, with the purpose of exempting himself from or reducing the punishment or compensation (Liao 2003: 49). So different purposes (see Liao 2009a, 2009b for a detailed discussion of the principle of purpose) of the prosecutor and the plaintiff lead to their use of different expressions to describe the same incident.

3. 2 Trial 6

Trial 6 is a civil trial of debt dispute. The fact of this case is as follows: Du (female) owed Liu (male) ￥153, 000 and was accused by Liu to Luhe District Court of Nanjing (henceforth LDCN), demanding her to repay the money. LDCN ruled that Du should repay the money within ten days of the effective date of the judgment. In the process of implementation, LDCN ruled to stop the implementation because Du was out of work and propertyless. So Liu applied to LDCN to add Wang (Du's ex-husband) as the person subject to enforcement. Liu's reason was that the debt dispute took place when Wang and Du's conjugal relation still existed, thus the debt should be regarded as their common obligation. LDCN ruled that Wang should be added as the person subject to enforcement. Wang didn't accept the judgment and appealed to Nanjing Intermediate People's Court (NIPC).

Usually, in the trial, the dispute focus is the site of and stake in the struggle. Thus, the key notions of the dispute focus are fiercely debated and overlexicalized by the subjects. In this case, the disputed debt, i.e. the money borrowed by the defendant (Du) from the plaintiff (Liu), is the key notion of the dispute focus and is thus fiercely debated and overlexicalized. The expressions used by different subjects, especially the opposing parties (the plaintiff, the defendant, and the appellant) to refer to it are quite different, if not opposite. See the following examples:

A. Expressions used by the plaintiff related to the disputed debt:

jiè de qián 'the borrowed money'
zhège qián 'the money'
tā zhège qián 'the money borrowed by her'
tā jiè wǒ de qián 'her money borrowed from me'
yào zhài 'asked for the debt'
tā jiè de shíhou 'when she borrowed the money'
nǐ jiè zhège qián 'the money borrowed by you'
jiè zhème duō qián 'borrowed so much money'

All of the above expressions used by the plaintiff refer to the disputed debt and the use of these expressions presupposes (see Levison 1983) that the defendant borrowed the money. In his statement, the plaintiff also pointed out how the money was used and the nature of the money. For example, when stating how the defendant used the money, the plaintiff said:

yòng zài jiātíng shēnghuó 'used in her family life'
yòng zài jiātíng fāngmiàn le 'used on her family'
qián shì yòng zài le jiātíng. 'The money was used on her family.'

The purpose for the plaintiff to stress that the money has been used in the family life of the defendant is to support his claim that the borrowed money should be repaid by the defendant and her ex-husband together. So, at last the plaintiff draws the conclusion:

tāmen fūqī gòngtóng de zhàiwù yīng yóu fūqī gòngtóng hái. 'The joint debt of the husband and wife should be repaid by the two of them together.'

Actually, the dispute focus of the court trial was "whether or not the debt belonged to the common obligation of the defendant and her ex-husband, and whether or not it should be repaid by the defendant alone or by the defendant and her ex-husband together". Through the above expressions, the plaintiff made clear of his claim: the money had been used in the family life of the defendant and should be repaid by the defendant and her ex-husband together.

B. The expressions used by the appellant related to the disputed debt:

a). The expressions referring to the disputed debt:

zhège qián 'the money'
pànjuéshū shàng de zhàiwù 'the debt stated on verdict'
ná nǐ de qián 'your money taken by her'
zhège zhàiwù 'the debt'
dù mǒu mǒu qiàn liú mǒu mǒu de kuǎnxiàng 'the money borrowed by Du from Liu'
sīxià xiàng liú mǒu mǒu jiè de 'borrowed the money secretly'
sīxià yuēdìng 'a secret agreement'

b). The expressions referring to the use of the money:

bāng tā jiejie chǎogǔ 'was used to help her older sister to play the stock market'

zhège qián dāngshí méiyǒu yòng yú jiātíng shēnghuó. 'The money was not used in family life at that time.'

tā jiùshì jiè tā yīdiǎn qián 'even though she borrowed some money from him'

c). The expressions referring to the nature of the money:

zhèxiē qián zhǐ néng zuòwéi dù mǒu mǒu gèrén zhàiwù, zhǐ néng yóu dù mǒu mǒu gèrén lái chánghuán. 'The money should only be regarded as the personal debt of Du and should be repaid by her alone.'

The expressions used by the appellant show that he had a different idea. His expressions give the listener the impression that at first he didn't know that his ex-wife had borrowed the money from the plaintiff because it was 'a secret agreement' and he had nothing to do with the debt because it was 'the money borrowed by Du from Liu'. With regard to the use of the money, he claimed that the money was used to 'help her older sister to play the stock market 'and 'was not used in family life'. So he drew the conclusion that 'this money should only be regarded as the personal debt of Du and should be repaid by her alone'. His conclusion is just the opposite to that of the plaintiff, who claims that the debt should be repaid by the defendant and her ex-husband (the appellant) together.

C. Expressions used by the judge:

a). Expressions referring to the disputed debt:

Noun Phrases:

jièkuǎn 'the loan'

dù mǒu mǒusuǒ qiàn liú mǒu mǒu shí wǔ wàn sān qiān yuán qián de zhàiwù 'the ￥153，000 debt owed by Du to Liu'

dù mǒu mǒusuǒ qiàn de shí wǔ wàn sān qiān yuán qián de zhàiwù

'Du's ￥153，000 debt'

dù mǒu mǒusuǒ qiàn liú mǒu mǒu de zhàiwù 'the debt owed by Du to Liu'

zhège shí wàn kuài qián 'this ￥100,000'

Jiè qián yīshì 'the fact of borrowing the money'

zhège jiè de qián 'the borrowed money'

nǐ jiè de shí wǔ wàn sān qiān yuán qián 'the ￥153,000 that you borrowed'

Verb Phrases:

jiè qián 'borrowed the money'

yào qián 'asked for the money'

qiàn tā zhège qián 'owed him the money'

Clauses:

dù mǒu mǒu jiè zhège 10 wàn kuài qián. 'Du borrowed this ￥100, 000'

The expressions used by the judge are neutral, which reflects his ideology. In the court trial, the goal of the judge is to find out the truth of the matter by following certain legal procedures and then pass judgment according to law. So the thought of the judge tends to be neutral (Liao 2003: 377). The above expressions show that in the trial the judge generally took a neutral stance, which is in accordance with his role. However, it should be noted that his expressions presuppose that the defendant borrowed the money, which shows that he believes that the borrowing of the money is a fact, although the defendant insisted on saying that she had not borrowed the money. Her expressions are as follows:

wǒ méiyǒu jiè guò. 'I didn't borrow the money.'

wǒ méiyǒu jiè qián. 'I didn't borrow the money.'

wǒ méiyǒu ná zhè bǐ qián. 'I didn't take the money.'

In this case, the phenomenon of overlexicalization figures prominently; different subjects (the plaintiff, the

appellant, the judge and the defendant) use different words and expressions to describe or refer to the disputed debt. From the overlexicalization of this notion we can see that the disputed debt is the focus of attention of all the parties in the court trial and thus is the site of and stake in the struggle.

3. 3 Trial 8

Trial 8 is an administrative trial of occupational injury confirmation. The fact of the case is as follows: Liang (the third party) was injured in a traffic accident and couldn't continue his work. The defendant, Jiangning Bureau of Labor and Social Security of Nanjing (JBLSSN), recognized the accident as an occupational injury and demanded China Travel Service of Nanjing (CTSN), for which Liang was working, to pay the compensatory money. CTSN sued JBLSSN to Jiangning District Court of Nanjing (JDCN) for the occupational injury certification it had made, claiming that Liang was just a temporary worker at their company and didn't have a labor relationship with it, so the occupational injury certification was groundless and therefore invalid.
The dispute focus of this case is "whether or not there is a labor relationship between the plaintiff (CTSN) and Liang (the third party)". So the nature of Liang's work at CTSN is the key point in the trial. The expressions used to describe it reflect the viewpoints and ideologies of different subjects in the trial.

A. Expressions used by the plaintiff (CTSN) to describe the nature of the work of Liang and related facts:
a). Phrases:

línshí gōng 'temporary worker'
línshí gōng dì xìngzhì 'temporary work in nature'
línshí gōng gōngzī biǎo 'payroll of temporary workers'
gàn yītiān ná yītiān qián 'worked a day and got paid for the day'
gàn yītiān jiù dēngjì yītiān 'worked a day and registered for the day'
zì dài de gōngjù 'his tools were self-provided'
bù cúnzài láodòng guānxì 'without a labor relationship'

b). Clauses:

gōngzuò pái zhǐshì wèile qūfēn yóukè háishì jǐngqū nèi rényuán shǐyòng de. 'The working card was only used to distinguish personnel working in the scenic spot from tourists.'
gōngzuò pái bùnéng zuòwéi rèndìng gōngshāng de yījù. 'The working card shouldn't be regarded as the basis for recognizing occupational injury.)
bùnéng píng cǐ zhèngmíng liáng mǒu mǒu yǔ yuángào jùyǒu láodòng guānxì. 'This cannot be regarded as the basis for proving that Liang had a labor relationship with the plaintiff.'
bèigào méiyǒu rènhé zhèngjù jiù zuò chū le gōngshāng rèndìng. 'The defendant made the occupational injury certification without any evidence.'
bèigào zuò chū de jù zuò xíngzhèng xíngwéi méiyǒu shìshí yījù. 'The defendant conducted the administrative behavior without factual basis.'
bèigào zuò chū de jùtǐ xíngzhèng xíngwéi shì bù héfǎ de. 'The administrative behavior conducted by the defendant is illegal.'
qǐngqiú fǎyuàn yīfǎ chèxiāo bèigào zuò chū de gōngshāng rèndìng shū. 'We request the court to revoke the occupational injury certification made by the defendant.'

By using the above expressions, the party of the plaintiff tried to prove that there wasn't a labor relationship between it (CTSN) and Liang (the third party). Its agents stated that Liang was *línshí gōng* 'a temporary worker' at CTSN because he *gàn yītiān ná yītiān qián* 'worked a day and got paid for the day' and his work there was *línshí gōng dì xìngzhì* 'temporary work in nature' and *bù cúnzài láodòng guānxì* 'without a labor relationship'. Based on the above statement, they concluded that the administrative behavior carried out by the defendant was *méiyǒu shìshí yījù* 'without factual basis' and thus *bù héfǎ de* 'illegal'. And finally they requested the court to

chèxiāo bèigào zuò chū de gōngshāng rèndìng shū 'revoke the occupational injury certification made by the defendant'.

B. Expressions used by the defendant (JBLSSN) to describe the nature of the work of Liang and related facts:

liáng mǒu mǒu shòushāng shíjiān hé chéngdù 'time and degree of Liang's injury'
liáng mǒu mǒu chūshì de jīngguò 'the process of Liang's accident'
liáng mǒu mǒu ménzhěn bìnglì 'Liang's outpatient medical record'
zhùyuàn bìnglì 'hospitalization medical record'
jíbìng zhěnduàn shū 'medical certificate'
zhìliáo jīngguò 'the process of treatment'
liáng mǒu mǒu de gōngzuò pái 'Liang's working card'
liáng mǒu mǒu gōngshāng rèndìng shēnqǐng biǎo 'Liang's application for occupational injury certification'
liáng mǒu mǒu zhígōng gōngshāng rèndìng shū 'Liang's occupational injury certification'
"láodòng fǎ" 'Labour Law'
"gōngshāng bǎoxiǎn tiáolì" 'Work-related Injury Insurance Regulations'
"gōngshāng rèndìng bànfǎ" 'Standard Rules about Cognizance Procedure of Workplace Injury'
dì sān rén yǔ yuángào cúnzài láodòng guānxì. 'The third party had a labor relationship with the plaintiff.'
dì sān rén yǔ yuángào zhī jiān shì yǒu bàochóu de láodòng. 'The relationship between the third party and the plaintiff was that of paid-labor.'
dì sān rén shì chángqí zài yuángào chǔ gōngzuò de. 'The third party had worked for the plaintiff for a long time.'
láodòng bùmén yǒu quán quèdìng shuāngfāng de láodòng guānxì. 'The labor department has the right to affirm the labor relationship between the two parties.'
wǒ jú shì ànzhào chéngxù fǎ jìnxíng rèndìng de. 'Our bureau made the occupational injury certification according to procedure law.'
qǐngqiú fǎyuàn wéichí wǒ jú zuò chū de jùtǐ xíngzhèng xíngwéi. 'We request the court to uphold the specific administrative behavior of our bureau.'

Various phrases were used by the defendant to state the fact related to the injury of Liang, e.g. 'time and degree of Liang's injury', 'the process of Liang's accident', 'Liang's outpatient medical record', 'hospitalization medical record' 'medical certificate'. The aim was to show that the defendant had made thorough investigation into the accident and Liang's injury before the occupational injury certification was made. The quotations from three legal documents: Labor Law, Work-related Injury Insurance Regulations and Standard Rules about Cognizance Procedure of Workplace Injury, were used to prove that the defendant 'made the occupational injury certification according to law'. Based on the above evidence, they drew the conclusion that 'the third party had a labor relationship with the plaintiff' and thus requested the court to 'uphold their specific administrative behavior'. Their story is completely different from that of the plaintiff.

In this case, the discourse of the third party also deserves our notice. The following are expressions used by the third party and his agent to describe the nature of his work at CTSN and related facts:

A. Expressions used by the third party:

wǒ shì chángqí zài gōngsī gōngzuò de. 'I had worked at the company for a long time.'
wǒ shì chángqí de. 'I was a long-term worker.'
yǔ línshí gōng shì bù yīyàng de. 'I was different from temporary workers.'

B. Expressions used by the agent of the third party:

yuángào yǔ dì sān rén zhī jiān shì chángqí láodòng guānxì. 'The plaintiff had a long-term labor relationship with the third party.'

dì sān rén jìnrù gōngsī yǐlái yīzhí jiēshòu gōngsī de kǎoqín. 'The third party had been checked on work attendance since the beginning of his work at the company.'

05 nián yǐlái dōu yào běnrén qiānzì. 'Since 2005, personal signature was required for the attendance.'

gōngzuò pái shàng yǒu jùtǐ de biānhào jí gōngzhǒng. 'Specific serial number and type of work was printed on the working card.'

cúnzài shíjì de láodòng yònggōng guānxì. 'Actual labor relationship existed.'

dì sān rén měi yuè dōu zài gōngsī de cáiwù lǐngqǔ gōngzī. 'The third party got his payment at the accounting department of the company every month.'

tóngyì bèigào yìjiàn. 'We agree with the defendant.'

The third party (Liang) insisted that he *yǔ línshí gōng shì bù yīyàng de* 'was different from temporary workers' and *chángqí zài gōngsī gōngzuò* 'was a long-term worker'. In so saying, he wanted to prove that he had a labor relationship with the plaintiff, the purpose of which is to justify the validity of the occupational injury certification made by the defendant. The reason is that only if the occupational injury certification was proved to be valid could he get the compensation. What the third party agent said is also for the same purpose, i.e. to prove that *yuángào yǔ dì sān rén zhī jiān shì chángqí láodòng guānxì* 'the plaintiff had a long-term labor relationship with the third party'. So finally he drew the conclusion: *tóngyì bèigào yìjiàn* "we agree with the defendant'.

It should be pointed out that in this case, the third party and the defendant share the same purpose, i.e. to prove that there was a labor relationship between the plaintiff and the third party and thus justify the validity of the occupational injury certification made by the defendant. Furthermore, the third party and the defendant also share the same interests. If the occupational injury certification made by the defendant was ruled to be valid by the judge, the third party could get the compensatory payment from the plaintiff while the defendant would win the case and thus save its face and guard its authority as a government institution. Our verbal interaction is goal-driven (Liao 2009b: 101). In this case, the reason for the plaintiff and the defendant to make different classifications on the same notion (the nature of the third party's job at the plaintiff), and the defendant and the third party to share the same classification is that they have same or different purposes.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, through the analysis of three trials, we find that 1) in trials, opposing courtroom participants (e.g. plaintiffs and defendants, prosecutors and defendants, appellants and appellees) tend to use expressions with different and even opposite meanings to classify or define people, incidents, objects and concepts involved in the dispute focus, 2) courtroom participants with similar or same purposes tend make similar or same classifications of people, incidents, objects and concepts, 3) overlexicalization of notions involved in the dispute focus is an important feature of courtroom discourse. The analysis of such overlexicalization can shed light on the stances, ideologies and purposes of the courtroom participants concerned.

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