Genre- and Topic-Specificity within Newspaper Discourse: From the Perspective of Evaluation

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Chair: Professor Angel M.Y. Lin

Abstract:
Specificity concerns language variation, and evaluation the expression of opinion. Both are key terms in language studies, especially discourse analysis. Specificity and evaluation can of course be studied independently of each other, but a growing body of research shows that they can often be profitably studied together. Yet while much has been written about both linguistic phenomena in academic discourse, far less is known about them in newspaper discourse. In this talk, I will consider the notion of specificity within newspaper discourse from the perspective of evaluation, which plays a pivotal and yet dynamic role in constructing newspaper texts. Using a specialized 900,000-word corpus and a new framework of evaluative dimensions with a strong orientation to news values, I will look at how different types of evaluation are used to perform a wide variety of discourse functions in news stories, editorials and feature articles, which in turn throws much light on not only genre-specificity but also topic-specificity within newspaper discourse. I will end the talk with implications for the teaching of ESL and ESP courses.

About the speaker:
Jonathan Ngai received his PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Hong Kong. He is an assistant professor at School of Arts and Social Sciences, The Open University of Hong Kong, where he teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. His research interests include language contact, evaluation/stance, stylistics, academic discourse and journalistic discourse. His two recent papers have been published in The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics.

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