

A Proximization Study of Critical Discourse Analysis---Taking the Documentary Itaewon Crush as an Example

Kaiqi Zhang

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China

k22047185@163.com

Abstract. Based on the documentary Itaewon Crush, guided by proximization theory, this paper makes a comparative study of the discourse strategies of the documentary on the theme of sudden catastrophic events from two aspects: negative proximization and positive proximization. It is found that the entities recognized to be ODCs and IDCs, the use of lexical items, and the communication effects achieved are different in negative proximization and positive proximization. The former takes government and disaster as the external threat to the deictic center, emphasizing the serious consequences of disasters and government actions to realize the documentary's warning effect. The latter establishes a positive influence between the external entities and the deictic center to achieve the documentary's humanistic value.

Keywords: Proximization Theory; Positive Proximization; Documentary; Sudden Catastrophic Events; STA Modal.

1. Introduction

Itaewon Crush documents the stampede that occurred in Itaewon, Seoul, South Korea, on Halloween, 29th October 2022, which resulted in 159 deaths and had a significant social impact. As a communication medium, documentaries play an important role in arousing public attention, guiding public opinion, and constructing a political image after sudden disasters. The language used in documentaries based on sudden disasters reflects the relationship of power and implies implicit ideology. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, henceforth) focuses on power and social ideology as the main theoretical tools for research, treats discourse as a social construction under power, analyzes the internal structure of discourse, and explores the social meanings produced by linguistic symbols (Chen, 2023).

The research methodology of CDA is various. As a methodology for critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics proposed by Halliday (1994) aims to analyze the relationship between linguistic expressions and the realization of linguistic functions, and he divided the function of language into three categories: conceptual function, interpersonal function, and textual function. In addition, the dialectical-relational approach proposed by Fairclough (2009) summarizes a three-dimensional analytical framework for critical discourse analysis. The framework analyzes discourse from three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice, in which social practice and text determine the macro-processes and micro-processes of discursive practice, respectively, and discursive practice connects the relationship between them. Van Dijk (1993) proposed social cognition analysis, which uses social cognition as a medium to interpret the relationship between discourse structure and social structure, and to analyze how discourse structure affects social reproduction.

In recent years, with the cognitive turn of critical discourse analysis, Proximization Theory put forward by Cap (2006), as the latest research method, takes the construal process of discourse as the research object and analyzes the influence of discourse strategies on the legalization of discourse from spatial dimension, temporal dimension, and axiological dimension. The proximization theory is applied to the study of all kinds of public discourse, initially focusing on political discourse (Cap, 2008; Cap, 2010), and then extending to health (e.g., Li, 2021), environment (e.g., Lin & Dong, 2021), energy (e.g., Zhao, 2021), science and technology (e.g., Mu & Chen, 2023). At present, the research on public discourse mainly focuses on the negative proximization level, applying proximization theory to the text with negative meaning, to construct a discourse space in line with its interests.

However, little research has focused on the application of proximization theory in positive discourse to explore the positive significance of proximization theory in positive discourse.

Therefore, this paper will analyze the sudden catastrophic events represented by *Itaewon Crush* from both negative and positive proximization perspectives, aiming at exploring the discourse strategy and image construction in the documentary under the catastrophic background. The present study also sheds light on how the catastrophic documentary can achieve the purpose of popularization, education, and humanistic care. At the same time, the current study also intends to tap the powerful social forces of documentaries, realize the dissemination value of documentaries with catastrophic events as clues, and provide experiences and lessons for social reform change and development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the study of sudden catastrophic discourse

Sudden catastrophic events refer to events that usually do not happen easily and are unexpected, such as natural disasters, traffic accidents, terrorist attacks, etc.

Sudden catastrophic discourse takes sudden disaster as the theme, and previous studies mostly focus on news reports of sudden catastrophic events. Previous studies mainly took news communication as the research direction and explored the different positions of different types of media in mass communication and their social responsibilities in crisis events by studying the principles and methods of news reporting (e.g., Huang, 2023; Li, 2024; Xu, 2023; Zhu, 2023). For example, Zhu (2023) took 53 related reports published by the official Weibo accounts of *China News Service*, *People's Daily*, and *Beijing News* as research samples, and found that all relevant media chose a rational perspective and paid attention to the objectivity and authority of information, to achieve the dissemination effect and social value of news and arouse social concern and reflection on the accident. Meanwhile, Weibo, as the major media, achieved a lot of attention, comments, and forwarding because of its reasonable reporting text structure and in-depth analysis of the incident. Furthermore, Huang (2024), took the flood disaster caused by a rainstorm in Henan Province in 2021 as an example, made a comparative study of the direction and emphasis of the three different media in China, and reached the conclusion that disaster reporting should be timely disaster warning and stick to public opinion. Previous studies have rarely made critical discourse analysis on sudden catastrophic discourse to explore the discourse communication value of documentaries with disaster events as clues.

2.2 Proximization theory

The proximization theory comes from the development and extension of Chilton's (2004) Discourse Space Theory (DST, henceforth), which constructs a discourse space formed by the intersection of space, time, and axiology, and the intersection of the three dimensions is the deictic center. Entities constrained as inside-the-deictic-center elements located in the deixis center represent "I, we", while the entities opposite to the entities construed as inside-the-deictic-center elements are interpreted as entities construed as outside of discourse space.

On this basis, Cap (2006) put forward the concept of proximization, which refers to indirectly transmitting entities such as events, states of affairs, or ideologies to listeners and speakers, and constructing distant entities to influence the speakers and listeners. In this process, speakers use various discourse strategies to emphasize the invasion of entities on both speakers and listeners, aiming to show the negative impact and hostile situation brought by entity invasion, in this way, the legitimization of their actions can be realized.

Cap (2008) proposed the Spatial-Temporal-Axiological (STA) model, which summarizes the proximization strategy into three dimensions: spatial proximization, temporal proximization, and axiological proximization. The process of elements outside the deictic center (ODC) gradually invading elements of the deictic center (IDC) in physics is called spatial proximization. In spatial proximization, ODC is opposite to IDC, which will have a negative impact on IDC.

Temporal proximization refers to the process of identifying “now” as the center of the timeline, highlighting the current crisis by emphasizing the past and present impacts of ODCs on IDCs, as well as possible future impacts, and calling on IDCs to respond to ODCs in a timely and effective manner.

Axiological maximization is the process of understanding the ideological contradiction between IDC and ODC, and IDC makes corresponding responses to the conflicts that may be caused by the contradictions, thus transforming the ideological conflicts into actual conflicts.

On the relationship among the three dimensions, Cap (2010) thinks that there is a compensation mechanism for axiological proximization, that is, when the spatial and temporal proximization strategies in discourse decrease, the application frequency of Axiological proximization will increase accordingly.

2.3 Empirical Research on Proximization Theory

The current research on proximization mostly regards proximization strategy as a negative discourse strategy. ODC and IDC in discourse space have irreconcilable contradictions, and they are in opposition. When ODC moves to IDC or has an impact on IDC, IDC will make a preventive response to realize the legalization of discourse.

Taking a single corpus as the analysis object, the current research on negative proximization has been extended to politics (Cap, 2014; Cap 2016), public health (Yao,2021), science and technology (Mu & Chen, 2023; Zhou, 2021) and other fields. For example, Zhou (2021) took the reports of German media on Huawei as the corpus, applied the proximization theory, made a quantitative analysis based on the corpus, and made a qualitative analysis of the specific discourse examples of the German media's “Huawei threat” standpoint. The extensive use of spatial proximization and temporal proximization highlighted the German media’s concern about the threat posed by Huawei’s development, but explicitly denied the “Huawei threat theory” in the axiological dimension, and then concluded that “public media and politics are interrelated”.

With the continuous development of the research on proximization theory, the research object has been expanded from a single corpus to multiple horizontal or vertical parallel corpora. The comparative study of two or more materials under the same theme has become a new research trend. For example, Yang (2023) explored the pragmatic differences between Chinese and American news reports on trade from 2018 to 2020, indicating that Chinese discourse strategies tend to resolve conflicts and seek cooperation, while the United States intends to deny the past cooperation model between China and the United States to reconstruct international rules.

In addition, under the same theme, the comparative study of the corpus published by the same country in different time intervals and different leader intervals is also a hot topic at present. For instance, Liu & Xu (2018) took *The National Security Strategy* issued by three presidents, Bush, Obama, and Trump as the corpus, and discussed the change in China’s image in reports. The research showed that with the change of time, “China”, as the ODC, has gradually moved away from the IDC instruction center, indicating that China has gradually changed from a partner to an opponent of the United States. This study focused on the attitude of the United States towards China, which is of practical significance for China to control and influence the US proximization strategy. A few studies have paid attention to the comparison of the proximization strategies between the original and the translated text, for example, Cao (2021) used the speech of Foreign Minister Wang Yi as a corpus to summarize the differences in the use of proximization between the original and the translated text: in spatial proximization, the original text focuses on embodying the results while the translated text focuses on describing the course of action; in temporal proximization, the translated text uses the contrast between tense more than the original text, to build up a sustained impact of the ODCs on the IDCs; and in axiological proximization, the translation enhances the contrast between the past and the future by augmenting the translation to influence positive axiological proximization. At the same time, the study also illustrates the application of proximization in translation perspectives, where the embodiment or non-embodiment of convergence can be used as an evaluation criterion for the quality of translations.

Under the background of critical discourse analysis, positive discourse analysis came into being as a backwash to critical discourse analysis (Zhu, 2006). Discourse analysis considers that we cannot solve practical problems only by negative criticism, and we should adopt a positive and friendly attitude to deal with ourselves and the opposite party (Maltin, 2004). On this basis, the approach strategy can also be used as a positive discourse strategy to analyze the positive value orientation in discourse, build a positive image, shape a positive cognition of the world, and construct a positive development trend in the future. Luo & Cao (2023) analyzed the positive approach the strategy applied in Zhu Ziqing's prose *Spring* from the perspective of positive discourse analysis. The research found that as ODC, "spring" has a positive influence on IDCs (animals and plants). ODC approaches IDCs in spatial dimension and temporal dimension and has a continuous impact on IDCs. IDCs respond positively to the coming of ODC. The study shows that the relationship between IDC and ODC is harmony and cohesion, which is different from the opposing relationship defined in past theories.

To sum up, research on proximization mostly focuses on negative proximization, with less research on positive proximization. Research on sudden catastrophic events mostly focuses on the direction of news dissemination, with less research on analyzing catastrophic events from the perspective of discourse analysis. This paper analyses the use of discourse strategies in the documentary *Itaewon Crush* from the perspectives of negative proximization and positive proximization. In the corpus, negative proximization mainly focuses on the description of the severity of the disaster and the criticism of the Korean government's inaction, while positive proximization focuses on the humanistic power embodied in the disaster and the recovery and reconstruction of individuals after the disaster.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research questions

This study mainly tries to answer the following three questions:

1. What negative proximization strategies did *Itaewon Crush* adopt, and what ideology did it reflect?
2. What positive proximization strategies did *Itaewon Crush* adopt, and what ideology did it reflect?
3. What kind of values are shaped and embodied in *Itaewon Crush* under the use of negative proximization strategies and positive proximization strategies?

3.2 Data collection

In this paper, the documentary *Itaewon Crush* produced by the American company "See It Now Studios" is taken as the research corpus, and the English subtitles of the documentary are collected and sorted out. The documentary *Itaewon Crush* consists of two episodes with a total of 8672 words, which mainly records the memories of the survivors and related persons in the 2022 Halloween stampede in Itaewon, and records the psychological state and emotional tendency of the respondents before, during, and after the incident. The documentary was first screened in the United States and then aired on the KBS1 network on the eve of the one-year anniversary of the Itaewon disaster.

3.3 Research methods

This paper uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative analysis takes the corpus software UAM CORPUS TOOL as the retrieval tool, and the STA model in the approximation theory as the analysis framework. The spatial, temporal, and axiological lexical items in the proximization theory are screened respectively, and the qualified lexical items are manually marked and word frequency is calculated to generate a word frequency distribution table. Word frequency data can be used as a direct basis for analyzing the usage of lexical grammar items. Qualitative analysis aims at the specific text in the corpus and analyzes the use of approaching strategy in the specific text.

4. Research results

4.1 Negative proximization

4.1.1 Spatial proximization

Cap divides spatial proximization into six lexical items: Noun phrases (NPs) construed as elements of the deictic center (IDCs); Noun phrases (NPs) construed as elements outside the deictic center of the DS (ODCs); Verb phrases (VPs) of motion and directionality construed as markers of movement of ODCs toward the deictic center; Verb phrases (VPs) of action construed as markers of the impact of ODCs upon IDCs; Noun phrases (NPs) denoting abstract concepts construed as anticipations of the impact of ODCs upon IDCs; Noun phrases (NPs) denoting abstract concepts construed as effects of the impact of ODCs upon IDCs. The lexical items of spatial proximization included in *Itaewon Crush* are shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Negative Spatial proximization framework and its key lexico-grammatical items

Items	Representative Words	Frequency
Noun phrases (NPs) construed as IDCs	I/me/we/ us/they/them/ Victim families/ Itaewon/ young people/street	0.70%
Noun phrases (NPs) construed as ODCs	South Korean authorities/South Korean government; Crowd/People/an influx of people; The incident/this disaster/the tragedy; certain conservative groups/old generation;	0.28%
Verb phrases (VPs) of motion and directionality construed as markers of movement of ODCs toward the deictic center	Rush into/walked right pass/have descended upon/coming in/push in/come in/ pass through/pressed	0.09%
Verb phrases (VPs) of action construed as markers of the impact of ODCs upon IDCs	Happens/ killed/fail/ taken from/ minimized/shifting blame/ claim	0.17%
Noun phrases (NPs) denoting abstract concepts construed as anticipations of the impact of ODCs upon IDCs	This kind of memory/certain things	0.02%
Noun phrases (NPs) denoting abstract concepts construed as effects of the impact of ODCs upon IDCs	Terror/ failure/ fault/pain/disaster	0.12%
Total		0.57%

According to Table 1, “Itaewon/young people” is constructed as IDC, which shows that the documentary takes “Itaewon” and “young people” who went to Itaewon to participate in activities as the victims of the accident. At the same time, the documentary constructs personal pronouns such as “I/me/we/us/they/them” as IDC, which reflects the subjective status of disaster survivors and related personnel as interviewees and aims to restore their true perspectives and feelings. IDCs account for a relatively high proportion in the spatial approach, which shows that the documentary creators focus on the feelings of IDCs and pay more attention to the image construction of accident victims (IDCs).

ODC in the corpus is mainly interpreted into four categories: South Korean authorities and South Korean government; the incident, individuals who caused the accident (Crowd/people/they/an influx of people), and who were unfriendly to the victims (certain conservative groups/old generation). The classification of ODC reflects the documentary's attitude towards the Itaewon accident, attributing the responsibility for the accident to the government's inaction, and expressing sympathy and support to the parties and victims of the accident.

In spatial proximization, the use of verbs of motion is intended to emphasize the uncontrollable crowd during the accident and highlight the seriousness of uncontrollable events. The corpus records the whole process of the stampede from the time flow, from before the accident, the initial evolution stage of the accident to the outbreak of the accident. During this process, verbs of motion and directionality are distributed in various stages, such as:

Example (1): Because the sheer amount of people have descended upon the Itaewon area here in Central Seoul.

Example (2): That feeling first came from uncomfortable, like, I can't move, and then it rushed into, actually, this is stopping my lungs from expanding.

Example (3): They put up police lines, but people walked right past them.

Example (1) describes that before the accident, crowds swarmed, and crowds (ODC) poured into Itaewon (IDC). Example (2) describes the stage when the incident started to develop in a bad direction. Under the crowded crowd, discomfort and suffocation (ODC) approached IDC (I). Example (3) describes that when the police began to intervene, the police's behavior of pulling up the cordon still failed to stop people from pouring into crowded places. By showing ODC's proximization to IDC, the case highlights the seriousness of the crush. At the same time, it shows that the occurrence of crush tends for a long time, which further reflects the lack of supervision by the Korean police and the Korean government, which leads to the accident.

In addition to describing the proximization of the ODC to the IDC, verb phrases are used to reflect the impact of the ODC on the IDC, with a frequency of 0.17% in the corpus, to reflect the wide range of impacts of the accident and its adverse effects. For example, in example (4), ODC "happened", and had a very bad effect (killed people) on IDC. The use of discursive strategies aims to highlight the impact of the accident and realize the warning effect of the documentary.

Example (4): When a disaster like this happens, that killed so many people, the Korean government should do what they're supposed to do: figure out who's responsible.

Examples (5) and (6) indicate the expectation of ODC's influence on IDC through noun phrases (NPs). The noun phrases "this kind of memory" and "certain things" refer to the frightening and unforgettable deep memory of the stampede accident. The use of these phrases not only illustrates the physical and mental harm caused by the accident but also reflects that the documentary is based on the humanitarian perspective and pays attention to the psychological state of the accident witness.

Example (5): I just don't understand how something like that could have transpired. I don't want to leave Seoul carrying the weight of that memory.

Example (6): I've been around tragic things in my life being deployed, but certain things, you cannot get out of your head. Certain things are going to stick with you.

In terms of the sixth category of spatial proximization items, some noun phrases (word frequency is 0.12%) representing abstract concepts are used to indicate the results of ODC's influence on IDC. Taking example (7) as a representative, "terror" shows the results of ODC's invasion of IDC and its influence on IDC, vividly shows the bad results caused by the continuous influx of people,

demonstrates the terrorist process of disaster evolution and makes the documentary itself more structured while showing its position.

Example (7): As I was carried out on a stretcher, I could barely open my eyes, but I saw people staring at me, gasping in terror.

4.1.2 Temporal Proximization

Temporal Proximization can be divided into five categories of lexical items: Non-finite noun phrases are recognized as substantive impacts of ODC in different time frames, the contrasting use of the general past tense and the present perfect constructs ODC’s impact on IDC from the past to the future, nominative noun phrases are recognized as markers of ODC’s future impact on IDC, modal verb phrases are used to construct the impact of ODC on IDC from the present to the future and parallel contrasting discourse forms recognize opposite or advantageous futures.

Table 2 Negative Temporal proximization framework and its key lexico-grammatical items

Item	Representative Words	Frequency
Non-finite noun phrases are recognized as substantive impacts of ODC in different time frames	a day/a time/a disaster/a tragedy	0.13%
The contrasting use of the general past tense and the present perfect constructs ODC’s impact on IDC from the past to the future	At least 59 people have been killed// If police had just responded to the initial calls/ They told us that he had passed	0.21%
Nominative noun phrases are recognized as markers of ODC’s future impact on IDC	their picture in the memorial/the amount of flowers/the notes they wrote	0.07%
Modal verb phrases are used to construct the impact of ODC on IDC from the present to the future	It might be a psychological response to suppress terror and not panic /how 159 people could die/ This wasn't a problem that could've been solved	0.14%
Parallel contrasting discourse forms recognize opposite or advantageous futures	There were many police as we argued, But on the night of the disaster, there were no police.	0.01%
Total		0.2%

The overall percentage of temporal Proximization in the corpus is 0.57%, slightly less frequent than spatial Proximization.

In terms of the first category of lexico-grammatical items of temporal proximization, non-finite verb phrases formed with the indefinite article “a/an” are widely used in the documentary, such as “a day”, “a time”, “a disaster”, “a tragedy”, which recognize ODC as an objective entity, presenting the suddenness and uncertainty of the impact of the ODC. The use of non-finite noun phrases illustrates the unpredictability of the disaster and if IDCs don’t pay attention and take precautions, this threat may happen again at any time. In this way, the documentary’s attitude of rebuking the South Korean government and its aim of calling on the public to reflect on the disaster is legitimized.

According to the second category of lexical items, the joint use of the present perfect and general past tense reflects the persistence of ODC’s threat. For example, in Example (8), the continuous growth of the death toll is described through the change of tense, which highlights the far-reaching negative impact of the stampede accident. The subjunctive mood is used in example (9) to construct

the preconditions to prevent the disaster, which shows that the Korean police and authorities failed to fulfill their corresponding responsibilities in the stampede accident and failed to respond to the on-site help in time. As a medium to convey attitudes and ideology in documentaries, this lexicogrammatical strategy criticizes the irresponsibility and inaction of the Korean government.

Example (8):

At least 59 people have been killed. 100 people dead. -105 people dead.
-146 people. -149. -150dead. When I heard 158, I felt numb, like a murder. Like I killed them.

Example (9):

If the police had just responded to the initial calls at 6:34 pm, this tragedy could've been avoided.

Noun phrases are used in the Itaewon Stampede documentary to construct the impact of ODC on IDC in the future. Example (10) describes the scene of people mourning the dead at the accident site after the disaster. In this example, the use of multiple noun phrases, like “their picture”, “the amount of flowers”, and “the notes they wrote” reflects the continuity of the impact of ODC on IDC in the future. Those noun phrases carry heavy memories of the time of the incident, and the memories will continue to stimulate IDC in the future, making it constantly recall the tragic experience of the disaster.

Example (10):

Seeing their picture in the memorial, the amount of flowers that they had, and the notes they wrote, it was so hard for me to, like come to terms that they were dead. I haven't processed it yet.

The documentary also employs modal verbs such as “would”, “could”, and “will”, which are used to extend the threat posed to IDC by ODC from the past to the future. The use of “could” in example (11) emphasizes the fact that the adverse effects of the stampede, which resulted in deaths, continue to exist from the “present” to the “future”. The presentation of the impact of the disaster fulfills the important role of disaster documentaries in provoking social reaction and reflection.

Example (11): So, it's tough to fathom how 159 people could die in a central district within a developed country's capital.

In *Itaewon Crush*, the use of contrastive sentences is relatively low (0.01%). In Example (12), by comparing the behavior of the police in the disaster with the behavior of the police in the mourning scene, it shows the failure of the police in dealing with the stampede accident, as well as the cover-up and evasion of their own mistakes, and constructs the dissatisfaction attitude of IDC (interviewee) towards ODC (Korean police).

Example (12):

I offered a final meal to ensure their peaceful rest, a practice deeply ingrained in Korean culture. But the police tried to stop the ritual. There were many police as we argued, but on the night of the disaster, there were no police.

4.1.3 Axiological Proximization

In the proximization theory, axiological proximization is divided into three categories of lexicogrammatical items: Noun phrases (NPs) expressing abstract notions conceptualized as values and/or value sets/ideologies of IDCs; Noun phrases (NPs) expressing abstract notions conceptualized as values and/or value sets/ideologies of ODCs; Linear discourse sequences conceptualized as negative value sets or ideology of ODCs invading IDCs. Table 3 shows the axiological proximization items in *Itaewon Crush*:

Table 3 Negative Axiological proximization framework and its key lexico-grammatical items

Item	Representative Words	Frequency
Noun phrases (NPs) expressing abstract notions conceptualized as values and/or value sets/ideologies of ODCs	I consider it a criminal act/it found a fault the police and the local authorities for not planning for the event well enough	0.13%
Linear discourse sequences conceptualized as negative value sets or ideology of ODCs invading IDCs	At the same time, I couldn't process my emotions, then apathy gave way to frustration, grief, and anger.	0.21%
Total		0.34%

Axiological Proximization in the documentary focuses on noun phrases that express the negative value of ODC, example (13) and example (14) refer to ODCs with noun phrases that reflect negative values, and the Itaewon stampede accident is referred to as a “fault” and a “crime” of the authority, which provides legal support for IDC to express its disappointment with the Korean administration and accuse the Korean government of irresponsibility and inaction.

Example (13): I'm not, like a caustro-phobic person, but it was a lot of people.

Example (14): And as soon as I start moving forward an influx of people just pass through.

In addition, the corpus contains a linear arrangement of lexico-grammatical phrases, and several noun phrases with negative meanings are recognized as a proximization of ODC's negative ideology into practical activities. Example (15) shows the respondents' feelings after surviving the disaster and being admitted to the hospital for treatment, The arrangement of the noun phrases “apathy”, “frustration”, “grief”, and “anger” records the change of mindset of the survivors, and at the same time reflects the repetitive and long-lasting nature of the negative effects of the ODC.

Example (15): At that time, I couldn't process my emotions, and then apathy gave way to frustration, grief, and anger.

In negative proximization strategies, spatial proximization accounts for 64.4%, with ODC's proximity and impact on IDC in the spatial dimension as the main lexical-grammatical strategy to emphasize the adverse impacts caused by ODC. Temporal proximization accounts for 26.2%, highlighting the seriousness and continuity of the effects of ODC in the time dimension. Axiological proximization accounts for 8.9%, and the use of noun phrases with negative meanings conveys the survivors' powerlessness over the occurrence of the accident, their guilt and regret over the lives lost, and their difficulty in forgetting the tragic memories. Overall, *Itaewon Crush* uses negative proximization, identifying the event itself, the subjects in the event, the Korean authorities as ODCs, the interviewees, the people in the disaster, and the site of the incident, Itaewon, as IDCs. It constructs a negative image of the ODCs and reveals the suffering of the IDCs as a victim, to legitimize the criticism of the Korean government's mistakes and negligence from the perspective of conveying information and spreading values in the documentary, and realizing the documentary's role of documenting the truth and alerting the society.

4.2 Positive Proximization

4.2.1 Spatial Proximization

In this research, the use of positive proximization on spatial dimension mainly focuses on four types of lexico-grammatical items: Noun phrases (NPs) construed as elements of the deictic center (IDCs); Noun phrases (NPs) construed as elements outside the deictic center of the DS (ODCs); Verb phrases (VPs) of motion and directionality construed as markers of movement of ODCs toward the

deictic center; Verb phrases (VPs) of action construed as markers of the impact of ODCs upon IDCs. Table 4 shows the distribution frequency of lexical items on spatial dimension.

Table 4 Positive Spatial proximization framework and its key lexico-grammatical items

Items	Representative Words	Frequency
Noun phrases (NPs) construed as elements of the deictic center (IDCs)	I/ me/we/ us	1.35%
Noun phrases (NPs) construed as elements outside the deictic center of the DS (ODCs)	Anne/Steven/ Sara/Grace/families the bouncers/a guy/ this stranger/ he/ she/the Black American soldier First responders/ the police/ the fire department	1.03%
Verb phrases (VPs) of motion and directionality construed as markers of movement of ODCs toward the deictic center	Walk to/walk into/walk up to/come/ show up/ tell/come up to/crush on	0.29%
Verb phrases (VPs) of action construed as markers of the impact of ODCs upon IDCs	Grab/pull/push/beg/pull/pull out/try/treat/piled/break	0.75%
Total		3.17%

The personal pronoun “I, me, us,” in *Itaewon Crush* is interpreted as IDC, which shows that the documentary is based on the interviewee's perspective and reflects the means of communication by which the documentary film draws closer to the audience. Noun phrases interpreted as ODCs include friends (“Anne, Steven, Sara, Grace”) who went to Itaewon with the interviewees, strangers (“the bouncers, a guy, this stranger, the black American soldier, he, she”), the government department (“first responders, the police, the fire department”). The groups that helped IDC in the disaster are conceptualized as ODCs. The frequency of IDC and ODC lexical grammar items is 1.35% and 1.03% respectively, and the frequency is similar, which further reflects that all the entities in the disaster groups support each other and help each other.

When the verb phrase indicates the movement of ODC to IDC, the approach of ODC to IDC has a positive significance, which is mostly reflected in the corpus as ODC coming close to IDC to provide relief to IDC, such as in Example (16), where the firefighters (ODC) arrive at the scene at the first time as rescuers, the verb phrase “show up” shows ODC's positive purpose to help trapped people in the crush. Unlike negative proximization, in positive proximization, ODCs are not a potential threat to IDCs, but rather bring courage and hope to IDCs.

Verb phrases are also used to show the ODC's positive impact on IDC in *Itaewon Crush*, in this kind of lexical item, the most frequently used verb phrases are “grab”, “pull” and “pull out”. In the accident, ODC tried its best to assist IDC and spontaneously rescued IDC. The use of the verb “grab” in example (17) reflected the positive significance of ODC on IDC. The ODC (“the black American soldier”) tries to pull IDC (“I”) out of the crowd. At the same time, IDC also makes a positive response to ODC's behavior.

Example (16):

First responders show up, and they were down at the bottom of the hill and they were screaming, trying to tell people to back up.

Example (17):

The Black American soldier was right in front of me. I reached out my hand and shouted. The American soldier grabbed my hand and said he was sorry that he couldn't get me out. He begged me to stay alive.

4.2.2 Temporal Proximization

Temporal proximization uses the current time as a reference point to indicate the effects of the past or future on the present. Temporal proximization items in this research include non-finite noun phrases recognized as substantive impacts of ODC in different time frames, the contrasting use of the general past tense and the present perfect constructs ODC's impact on IDC from the past to the future, modal verb phrases used to construct the impact of ODC on IDC from the present to the future.

Table 5 Positive Temporal proximization framework and its key lexico-grammatical items

Item	Representative Words	Frequency
Non-finite noun phrases recognized as substantive impacts of ODC in different time frames	as soon as/the soonest/at 8.00 pm /at 10.44	0.18%
The contrasting use of the general past tense and the present perfect constructs ODC's impact on IDC from the past to the future	We were trying to get as many people out before the crowd would collapse back in on itself. /I was telling her," Do not give up," because I saw her eyes kept rolling back.	0.36%
Modal verb phrases used to construct the impact of ODC on IDC from the present to the future	It might be a psychological response to suppress terror and not panic. I figured someone must've already called the police, and the help would come soon. / We made eye contact and said, We're going now. We're going to the exit. We'll see you there.	0.13%
Total		0.69%

In the documentary, non-finite noun phrases indicating periods and specific points in time show the proximity of ODC to IDC. For example, the use of “soonest” and “at 10:44 pm” in example (18) is a deliberate attempt to emphasize the proximity of the ODC to the IDC in the time dimension in the documentary interviews, to reflect the timely and rapid arrival of the rescuers (the fire department) as the ODC arrived at the scene in time and quickly to rescue IDC. This creates a positive image of the rescuers trying their best to save lives and shows the courage of people to fight against sudden disasters.

Example (18):

At 10:44 pm, the fire department sent us a request to dispatch. That was the soonest I could dispatch.

The general past tense has been widely used in the corpus, accounting for the highest proportion (0.36%) in temporal proximization. The use of the past tense reflects the influence of the past time on the present. Examples (19) and (20) both describe the process of disaster witnesses helping each other in the past tense, and the positive influence exerted by ODCs in the past tense is also of positive

significance to the present and the future. The documentary records interviewees’ memories of the past in the form of interviews and constructs a story with love and expectation in pain, which makes the documentary more influential.

Example (19): We were trying to get as many people out before the crowd would collapse back in on itself.

Example (20): I was telling her, “Do not give up,” because I saw her eyes kept rolling back.

The use of modal verbs in the corpus shows that ODC has a long-term and continuous influence on IDC, and IDC has always maintained a positive attitude towards ODC. In example (21), the use of modal verbs reflects the psychological activities of the interviewees when they are trapped in the disaster. People continue to respond positively to the influence of ODCs in the whole time interval from the past to the future and always express their trust and hope for ODCs. The use of “might” and “must” reflect the influence of ODCs from the past to the present and shows the belief of the trapped people in survival. The use of “would” constructs a long-term impact from the present to the future, which reflects expectations in the disaster.

Example (21): It might be a psychological response to suppress terror and not panic. I figured someone must've already called the police, and the help would come soon.

4.2.3 Axiological Proximization

In terms of positive axiological proximization, IDC and ODC realize the harmonious integration of values. Unlike negative proximization, the value trends of the two entities in positive proximization are not hostile. In the process of proximity, ODC has a positive ideology and IDC recognizes the beneficial value of ODC.

Table 6 Positive Axiological proximization framework and its key lexico-grammatical items

Item	Representative Word	Frequency
IDC's recognition of the value of ODC	seeing those two people reunite was, at the moment, like, the best thing/ " Allow me to apologize instead. "He bowed, saying, his apology comforted us./I'm starting to reclaim my former life. It's like a symbol. I come back to my life, my own life. /That's how we heal. That's the courage we need to overcome tragedy.	0.4%
Total		0.4%

In the documentary, ODCs have positive values and ideology. For example, in Example (22), after the disaster, doctors (ODC) expressed joy and excitement about the patient's recovery. The use of the noun phrase “courage” reflected the positive ideology conveyed by ODC. Positive axiological proximization in documentaries not only constructs a positive image of firefighters and doctors who act as rescuers in disasters but also shows people's courage to overcome disasters. It makes the audience identify with the positive attitude conveyed by the documentary, which reflects the responsibility of the documentary to convey positive energy and helps to guide the audience to look forward to the future and protect human life and health while remembering the disaster.

Example (22):

- My gosh, her legs look fine.
- It's making me cry.
- I was afraid she'd never walk again, let alone dance.
- All I want is for her to keep dancing and laughing.
- That's how we heal. That's the courage we need to overcome tragedy.

Overall, spatial proximization accounts for the largest proportion of positive proximization. In contrast to negative proximization, the spatial proximization strategy in positive proximization emphasizes that the influence exerted by ODCs on IDCs is positive and beneficial and that they are not only in harmonious symbiosis but also positively influence each other. In the temporal dimension, the positive impact that ODC has had on IDC continues over three intervals: past, present, and future, conveying the ongoing effects of rescuers helping survivors. In the axiological dimension, the values of ODC and IDC are not antagonistic but complementary, with IDC providing positive feedback while ODC conveys positive value. The documentary uses the strategy of positive convergence to identify various kinds of subjects in the disaster, such as those who experienced the accident, rescuers and other groups as ODCs, and the first-person individuals and groups from the perspective of the interviewees as IDCs, to construct a positive image of ODCs and to show the positive impacts of ODCs on IDCs. Through this, it shows the mutual help, determination, and courage of people during the disaster, conveying the warmth between people, and realizing the documentary's role of humanistic care and positive value dissemination through the portrayal of positive characters.

4.3 Visual Comparative Analysis of Negative Proximization and Positive Proximization

Based on the above analysis, Figure 1 and Figure 2 are the visual presentations of negative proximization and positive proximization in this study.

The STA Figure presents the location and relationship of the deictic center and discourse entities in the form of a three-dimensional space diagram, in which the “s” axis represents the spatial axis, the “t” axis represents the temporal axis, the “a” axis represents the axiological axis, and the intersection of the three axes represents the deictic center (“I, we, the victim, family, people”).

Figure 1 shows O1, O2, O3, and O4 as ODC entities, representing the Korean government and authorities, the disaster itself, the groups in the disaster, and the old generation who criticized the victims. Among them, IDC is most dissatisfied with the government departments and thinks that the government's management and control mistakes are the cause of the disaster, so O1 is farther from the origin of coordinates, followed by O2, O3, and O4, so the distance from the indicating center is arranged from far to near. Among them, the influence of ODC on IDC is emphasized in the corpus, so solid lines L1, L2, L3, and L4 represent the adverse influence of four types of ODC entities on the deictic center O, while the Korean government (O1), as the main person in charge of the disaster, triggered the production of O2, O3, and O4, which are represented by dotted lines L1', L2' and L3'. O1 (the South Korean government) should bear the main responsibility for the disaster, which led to the production of O2, O3, and O4, represented by dotted lines L1', L2', and L3'. In terms of the temporal dimension, O1, O2, and O3 affect IDC from the future to the present, so they are located on the left side of the “t” axis, while O4's influence on IDC lies in the evaluation after the event, which belongs to the future influence in the temporal dimension, so it is located on the right side of the “t” axis.

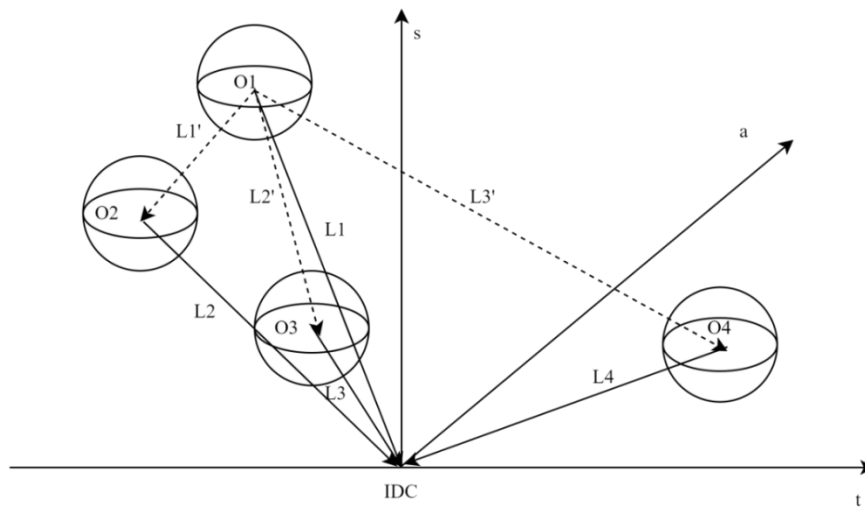


Figure 1 Visual analysis of negative proximization

The ODCs in Figure 2 include O1, O2, and O3, which respectively refer to friends who went to Itaewon with the interviewees, strangers who helped each other in the disaster, and rescuers who arrived in time. In Figure 2, solid lines L1, L2, and L3 represent the role of ODC in IDC. Because IDC’s response to ODC is emphasized in the use of positive proximization, dashed lines L4, L5, and L6 refer to the positive feedback of IDC’s influence on ODC. At the same time, there is also a positive and mutually beneficial relationship among various ODC groups, and dashed lines L1’, L2’, and L3’ are used to refer to the relationship among O1, O2, and O3.

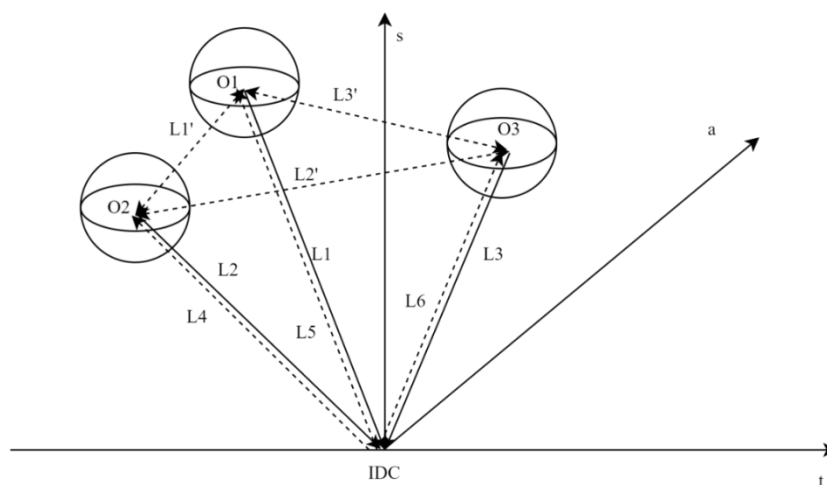


Figure 2 Visual analysis of positive proximization

Through visual analysis, we can find that negative proximization and the positive proximization constructed in the documentary have different emphases. Negative proximization tries to emphasize the seriousness of the disaster and the inaction of the government, to realize the disaster documentary’s warning effect, while positive proximization emphasizes the mutual positive effect between ODC and IDC, and between ODC and ODC, to convey humanistic feelings and positive social values.

5. Conclusion

As an important means of communication, documentaries have important social value. Catastrophic documentaries are of great significance for recording real events, arousing people's thinking, summing up lessons, and conveying humanistic care. This paper breaks the tradition of research and analysis from the perspective of communication and analyzes the image construction and communication purpose in documentaries from the perspective of the use of lexico-grammatical strategies based on the proximization theory.

Itaewon Crush includes the use of both negative and positive proximization, with the S-T-A model as the theoretical framework, and both of them take spatial and temporal proximization as the main discourse strategies, supplemented by axiological proximization. The former uses spatial proximization to analyze the bad influence of ODC on IDC in the whole process of disaster development and uses temporal proximization to highlight the persistence of the impact caused by the disaster through the change of tense and the use of modal verbs. The use of axiological proximization sets the value orientation of Korean authorities and accident witnesses against each other, showing the failure and mistakes of the authorities in dealing with disaster events. Negative proximization is used in the documentary to realize the recording and dissemination of real information, and at the same time, it also reflects the public's exposure to the disaster. The latter uses spatial proximization, emphasizing the mutual help and assistance of various groups in disasters, showing the warmth and strength in disasters. On the level of temporal dimension, the use of past tense and modal verbs expands the positive influence of helping people in disasters in the past to the present and the future, while the axiological approach is to construct the positive images of disaster witnesses and rescuers, and at the same time express the positive attitude towards the future. Positive proximization has constructed a positive image of the tenacious and brave people in disasters and realized the propaganda function and humanistic care function of the documentary.

The perspective of this research is transformed based on the original studies. The research direction focusing on negative proximization in the previous research is extended to the comparative study on both negative and positive proximization in this study. The research results explain the communication strategies of documentaries at the linguistic level and show the communication value of sudden disaster documentaries.

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