

# A study of psycho-correction discourse in community correction under restorative justice from the perspective of individuation

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The psychological correction programmes in community correction facilities programmes in China include activities helping the offender return to society, such as psychological counselling, legal counselling and personality disorder treatment. The present research studies the psychological correction discourse (including psychological counselling discourse and legal counselling discourse) used in community correction, which is used to help the offender eliminate their criminal mentality and other psychological problems, build awareness of the law, improve social adaptability and reintegrate into society. Psychological correction in community correction is still developing in China, and it is faced with many problems in practice. Psychological correction is not only a subject of research in psychology, but also in law, pedagogy, sociology, linguistics and other disciplines.

This study explores the psychological correction discourse in China's community correction by integrating linguistic theories and theories of educational sociology and law. The study investigates its research object from the perspective of Individuation Theory (Martin 2008; 2010) to find out the patterns of language used by the psycho-correctors, including the psychological counsellors and the legal counsellors, in practising psychological correction, and the social semiotic resources utilised by the offenders to exhibit their changes and reintegration. Then, this study adopts 'restorative justice' (Zehr 1990; Martin and Zappavigna 2016), a criminal justice concept involving the victim, the offender and the community in search of solutions which promote repair, reconciliation and reassurance, to explain the discursive practices of allocation and affiliation, such as scaffolding the offender's persona change, boosting the offender's cumulative legal knowledge-building through semantic waves and using bondicons to achieve reintegration in psychological correction discourse. (Being symbols around which communities rally or against which they rebel, bondicons can be materialised as images, such as the image of a dove as the bondicon for peace. Bondicons can be embodied as people. As a leader of India's independence movement, Mahatma Gandhi is the symbol of non-violent civil disobedience. Bondicons are also symbols in the culture, often symbolising very powerful and serious values, such as nationhood and spirituality.)

Individuation Theory provides a general interpretation for the allocation of semiotic resources from reservoir to repertoire through persona, and the change of persona influences the development of one's repertoire. Nevertheless, the previous research lacks the description of how different personae of an interlocutor are dynamically changed with the unfolding of the macro-genre. Thus, the generic features of psychological correction discourse need to be depicted to illustrate how the offender's persona changes with the unfolding of the macro-genres. Besides, seen from the allocation trajectory, Individuation Theory does not clearly indicate how different personae are identified and what discursive strategies are used to balance individual repertoire differences. Seen from

the affiliation trajectory, Individuation Theory assumes that affiliation is realised when interlocutors share an *interpersonal + ideational* coupling and form value alliances. However, it does not explicate how these value alliances are formed. It is necessary to interpret how the offender is discursively corrected from the perspective of Individuation Theory in psychological correction. Last, the principles of restorative justice constitute the legal ideology in the reservoir. How the principles of restorative justice are practised in psychological correction discourse in community correction from the perspective of linguistics is rarely explored.

Responding to the gap in the literature, three research questions are raised in this study:

1. What are the generic features of psychological correction discourse in community correction?
2. How is the offender discursively corrected by allocation and affiliation with the unfolding of the genres in psychological correction discourse?
3. In the context of restorative justice, why do the discursive practices of allocation and affiliation need to be conducted in psychological correction discourse?

Methodologically, adopting ethnographic fieldwork and Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) approaches to discourse analysis and taking the corpus software UAM Corpus Tool 3.3k as the analytical tool, this study analyses six psycho-counselling sessions and six legal counselling sessions. Based on Individuation Theory and combined with the Sydney School approach to genre (Martin and Rose 2008), Legitimation Code Theory (Maton 2014) and Iconography (Tann 2013), this study sets up an analytical framework. The Sydney School approach to genre is to investigate the genre as a staged, goal-oriented social process. Legitimation Code Theory is an explanatory framework in educational sociology, which concerns 'the basis of achievement within a field' (Maton 2014: 29). Iconography as a framework consists of three icons of *Gemeinschaft*, *Doxa* and *Oracle*, which is developed for the study of iconisation in discourse, examining the construction of shared values, a sense of community and the historical figures as constituents of a collective culture. The analytical framework of this study demonstrates the analysis of psychological correction discourse in community correction from the allocation and affiliation of Individuation Theory, and the discursive practice of restorative justice in psychological correction discourse.

Psychological correction in community correction consists of two macro-genres: psychological counselling and legal counselling. The generic analysis found that the former is composed of three elemental genres: problem diagnosis, problem decomposition and problem elimination, and the latter also contains three: knowing crime, admitting guilt and showing repentance. Both of the two macro-genres have distinctive linguistic realisations.

The individuation analysis of psychological correction discourse was conducted

with the unfolding of the genres. With UAM CorpusTool 3.3k, the study analysed the characteristics, categories and distribution differences of attitude resources used by the offender in psychological counselling and legal counselling. It found that the specialisation dimension of the Legitimation Code Theory offered a means of identifying the offender's different personae. With the unfolding of macro-genres, the offender's persona changes from a self-abandoned offender, an alienated offender or a frustrated offender to a capable offender (an offender who has high self-esteem and a realistic (yet subjective) assertion of his or her talents, capabilities and general worth) in psychological counselling, and from a culpable offender, a stubborn offender or a repentant offender to a redeemed offender in legal counselling. Combined with the semantics dimension in Legitimation Code Theory, the fluctuation of semantic waves in the legal counsellor's utterance scaffolds the offender's cumulative knowledge-building by channelling legal knowledge into his or her repertoire, expanding the offender's repertoire and helping the offender obtain a correct and complete understanding of the conviction and sentencing.

While the offender's repertoire expands and persona changes with the advancement of the genres, the affiliation also strengthens in psychological correction discourse. The study found that the psycho-correctors used the bondicons stored in the offender's repertoire to invoke the offender to share the values and beliefs around which the community rally. Then, the offender aligns with the community and becomes a member of it, facilitating his or her reintegration. Iconography explains how the psycho-corrector scaffolds the offender to share values and to foster alliances with members of a particular social group and then to affiliate to that social group.

The discursive practices of scaffolding the offender's persona change, boosting the offender's cumulative legal knowledge-building through semantic waves and using bondicons to realign the offender with the community in psychological correction discourse are guided by the principles of restorative justice. Restorative justice emphasises tearing off the criminal label, the prevention of recidivism and the offender's full reintegration into society. The study found that the offender's persona changed along with the expansion of his or her repertoire in the process of de-labelling. The reduction of recidivism is one of the goals of restorative justice. The unpacking and repacking of semantic waves in the legal counsellor's utterance channels legal knowledge into the offender's repertoire, enabling the offender to have a correct and comprehensive understanding of the obscure and meaning-condensed legalese in his or her conviction and sentencing, to accept guilt and to prevent the re-offending. The discursive practice of iconisation in psychological correction discourse that realigns the offender with the community by sharing communal values is conducted under the restorative tenets of reintegrative shaming, relation restoration and empowerment.

In the present study, the complementarity of Individuation Theory with other theories enhances the explanatory power of Individuation Theory, explaining how the psycho-correctors correct the offenders' problematic psychology and behaviours with discursive strategies, and how the offenders use repertoire resources to achieve change and reintegration. This study realises 'applicability' (Halliday 2009) stressed by SFL through explaining linguistic phenomena and problems in the field of penalty execution and ameliorating the psycho-correctors' counselling language. The findings of this study will guide the psycho-correctors' discursive counselling strategies to better serve community correction. It is also hoped that this study may shed light on more applications of restorative justice in judicial practices in China.

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