

# Study on the Cognitive Mechanisms of Stigmatized Discourse Production in Western Media Based on Cognitive Attention

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**Abstract:** Stigma is the negative interpretation of a certain individual/group by a stigmatizer for a specific purpose under the influence of public opinion. In order to break the state of being stigmatized, the key is to understand the generation processes of stigmatized discourses. This study puts forward a theoretical framework for analyzing the cognitive mechanisms and strategies of stigmatized discourse generation by combining cognitive attention with proximization theory. In order to validate this framework, this study then takes the western reports on Russia-Ukraine conflict as an example to analyze its production strategies both in terms of cognition and language. It turns out that the framework has strong explanatory power in investigating the generation processes, different attention strategies and the language expressions of the stigma. It is helpful to understand the cognitive operation behind stigmatization and select the corresponding anti-stigma discourse to de-construct these negative conceptualizations.

**Keywords:** Stigmatization; Stigmatized discourse; Cognitive attention; Proximization theory; Western media discourse.

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## 1. Introduction

Kopytowska et al. (2017: 58) pointed out that media reports on “potentially threatening objects” have a considerable influence on public opinions, and especially when audiences have no direct experience and only rely on media reports to judge what they hear and read, the influence of media reports will become even greater. The western countries used to employ mass media to misinterpret China’s system, principles and policies at will, resulting in a lot of stigmatized discourses, and especially after the outbreak of COVID-19, western politicians and media deliberately linked the coronavirus with China, and pushed the tide of stigmatizing China to a new peak through the epidemic (Wang, 2022: 125). In addition, any individual or country that threatens the interests of western countries will be labeled and stigmatized by western media.

The stigma phenomenon in the international community is basically the product of western concoction or fueling, which has caused great damage and influence to the national image (Wang, 2022: 125). In the face of the proliferation of stigmatized discourse in western media, it is necessary to reveal the reasons behind the emergence of stigmatized discourse and its production mechanism, then to choose more effective anti-stigmatized discourse strategies in order to strengthen the discourse power of China and other stigmatized countries and upgrade the discourse strategies so as to better carry out China’s diplomacy under the ever-changing situation.

## 2. Previous Studies on Stigmatized Discourse

Stigma refers to a mark engraved on a person's body, which represents his unpopularity and dishonorable moral status (Zhao & Yu, 2022: 64). Stigma marked by one country to another country is derogatory, persistent, situational and derivative, and its nature is discourse construction driven by

competition and exclusion in order to reduce the threat to the country, expand and maintain its influence and international status (Li, 2021: 11-12). There are many ways of labeling others with stigma, and mass media is the most influential and effective one, and also an important channel for stigma formation because the most important way for people to obtain information is always the mass media (Zhu, 2019: 7). Mass media influences the public’s impression on other countries and their people, causing these stigmatized countries to become a target of being repelled and repressed (Li, 2021: 12).

Research on stigma is mainly carried out from the perspective of sociology and social psychology. Studies in China attempt to analyze the ideology, political logic and intention behind western countries’ stigmatized discourse around an event, such as the stigma studies in terms of COVID-19 epidemic and 5G technology (e.g. Huang, 2021; Zhao & Yu, 2022). Several studies combine cognitive, social and psychological factors to examine the generation mechanism of stigmatized discourse from a macro perspective (Li, 2021; Li et al., 2022).

Based on the critical discourse analysis, some studies analyze the essence and characteristics of stigmatized discourse and put forward anti-stigma discourse strategies. For example, Zhang and Wang (2020) illustrate metaphors used in the stigmatized texts about public health emergencies and propose some solutions, while Huang (2021), using three-dimensional framework proposed by Fairclough, analyzes the biases in American China-related reports from three aspects of text, discourse and society. However, stigma studies on the basis of linguistic theories have still received relatively little attention, especially the studies analyzing cognitive generation processes and mechanisms of stigmatized discourse from cognition perspective.

As Wittgenstein (2016) pointed out, in order to solve those thorny problems in the hidden depths, it is necessary to uproot them, and dealing with superficial phenomena only will get twice the result with half the effort. Hart (2021) also

emphasizes that if we want to fully explain the relationship between language, knowledge and legalization, we must analyze the process of discourse generation. The means of expressing stigma is usually stigmatized discourse, and the analysis from the perspective of language and cognition is a direct and powerful way to survey the cognitive processes of stigmatized discourse generation. In view of the fact that most studies focus on explaining the mechanism of stigma formation at the social and communication levels, and fail to reveal the cognitive processes and principles of stigmatized discourse generation from the cognitive perspective, this study tries to answer the following three questions based on critical cognitive linguistics, combined with cognitive attention view and approximation theory: (1) how do western media produce stigmatized discourse? (2) what cognitive attention strategies do western media mainly use to create stigmatized discourses? (3) what are the linguistic features of these different attention strategies?

### 3. Analytical Framework of Cognitive Production Mechanism of Stigmatized Discourse

#### 3.1. Theoretical background

Critical cognitive linguistics is the fusion of cognitive linguistics and critical discourse analysis. It applies the theory and knowledge of cognitive linguistics to the discourse analysis in order to explore the functions of these linguistic cognitive symbols when people understand discourse (Hart, 2018). It highlights the fact that the process of meaning construction is the result of the interaction between people's long-term memory, cognitive construal and language system. In this way, discourses are given the power to embody the meaning characterized by ideology and influence people's social behavior (Zhang & Yang, 2019: 1). Therefore, for the same event, different ways of construal form different language expressions, and competing language use will cause or access different conceptual structures and conceptualizations, which will affect the reader's understanding, that is, the speaker or writer can manipulate the reader or listener's thinking by manipulating the language (ibid).

There are four types of analytical theories in critical cognitive linguistics, namely, critical metaphor analysis, discourse space theory, proximization theory and cognitive perspective of critical discourse research. The fundamental goal of critical cognitive linguistics is to examine the conceptual structures and processes aroused by language use in discourse, illustrate the information, value and ideology embedded in the discourse, and reveal the inequality, power, discrimination, views and positions hidden behind language (Zhang & Yang, 2019: 1).

Proximization theory is the advancement and development of discourse space theory. It analyzes the real purpose and ideology hidden behind discourse from three angles of time, space and value, therefore, it is defined as a compulsory construal operation, which makes speakers aware of the gradual approaching of external threats or arouses their self-awareness, and makes them aware of the possible harm, so as to seek the legalization of preventive measures (Zhang & Yang, 2019: 4). The stigmatization behavior of western media is a typical embodiment of the compulsory construal operation. Stigmatized discourse, which is used by the western media with the purpose of expanding and maintaining

their own influence and eliminating potential influencing factors, forcibly distort the description of objects and events and guide readers to realize the threats and risks brought by those who have been stigmatized.

Construal refers to the way of thinking or cognitive ability, and there are many construal ways and strategies for language production and understanding, including attention, judgement/comparison, perspective, and constitution/gestalt (Croft & Cruse 2004: 46). Cognitive attention consists of selection, scope, scalar adjustment and dynamic attention (ibid, see Table 1), covering and overlapping many aspects of three other construals. For example, selection is partially overlapping with perspective in which selection needs to use different perspectives to profile or metonymically refer to other things. In addition, scope also overlaps with judgement/comparison as scope includes the foreground and background as well as the availability of the information while judgement/comparison needs to compare or judge based on a standard or the background. Moreover, dynamic attention overlaps with constitution/gestalt because these two ways of construal require dynamicity. Therefore, this study takes cognitive attention as the main construal means to survey cognitive attention processes and construal strategies in producing stigmatized discourses.

In the framework of cognitive attention, selection is to focus our attention, including profiling and metonymy. Scope is the conscious information around the focus, including scope of predication, search domains, and accessibility. Scalar adjustment consists of quantitative and qualitative ones. The former one means adjusting the degree of granularity to describe things, such as from one dimension to three dimension or the adjustment of time granularity. Qualitative adjustment mainly refers to schematization by using more abstract words to describe. For instance, the word polygon cannot imply the basic features of a three-angle shaped graph, and it is more abstract compared with the word triangle. Finally, dynamic attention includes fictive motion and summary and sequential scanning.

**Table 1.** Cognitive attention framework

	Attention dimension	Different aspects of attention
Cognitive attention system	selection	profiling
		metonymy
	scope	windows of attention
		Scope of predication
		Search domains
	Scalar adjustment	accessibility
Qualitative adjustment: schematization		
Dynamic attention	Quantitative adjustment: granularity	
	Summary scanning	
		Sequential scanning

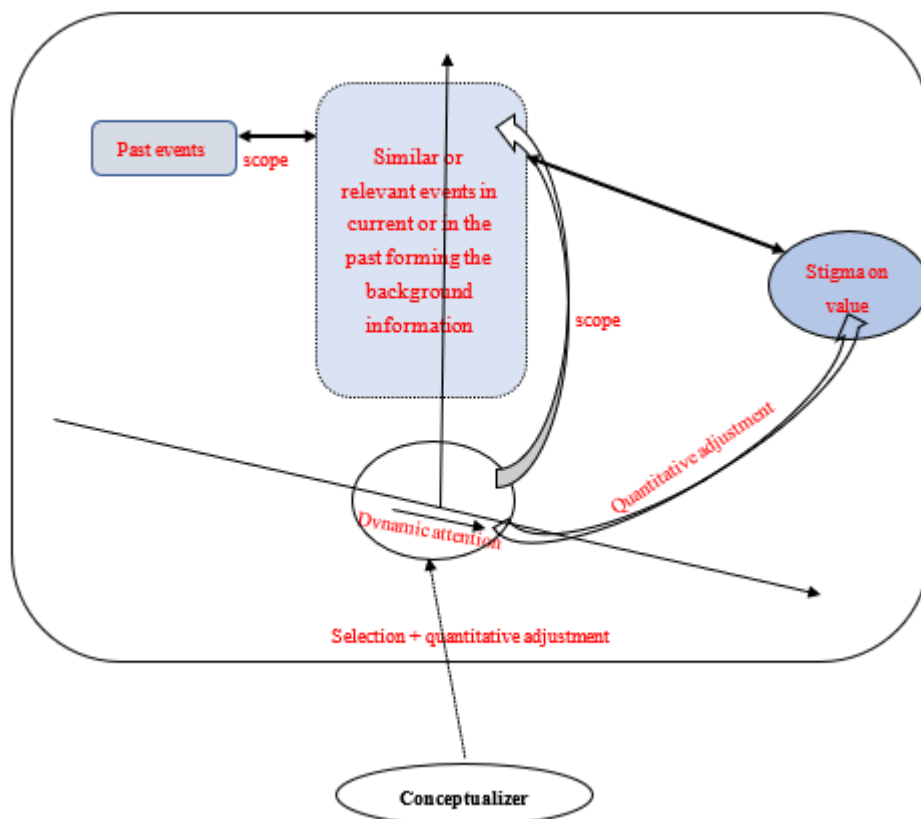
The theoretical framework of proximization is very clear and understandable. It can be used to visualize the purpose and implementation process of stigma from three dimensions: time, space and value. However, considering that it mainly focuses on revealing the ideology and purpose behind the discourse, it cannot be directly used to examine the cognitive processes and principles of stigma creation. Therefore, this study puts four elements of cognitive attention into the theoretical framework of proximization, and examines the

cognitive processes and different cognitive attention strategies used in producing stigmatized discourse in western media from three dimensions: time, space and value.

### 3.2. Cognitive attention-proximization model

In this model (Graph 1), since attention selection, scalar adjustment and dynamic attention are mainly employed to describe current events, they exist in the positive semi-axis of the time axis, the whole space axis and the value axis, while

attention scope involves the background information and search domain, so it is projected to the whole time-axis, space axis and value axis. The entities in the inside-the-deictic-centre (IDC) are the performers and producers of stigmatized discourse (e.g. western media), and the stigmatized entity is the one in the outside-the-deictic-centre (ODC). The performers take different ways to stigmatize the ODC from time, space and value.



Graph 1. Cognitive attention-proximization model

This model has two advantages. At first, compared with other theories of critical cognitive linguistics, proximization has a very clear and understandable analyzing framework, which can be used to analyze the IDC's discourse intention and ideology from time, space and value. By combining it with the cognitive attention theory, the combined model can not only bring the auxiliary role of the proximization theory into play, but also investigate the cognitive processes and cognitive attention strategies of stigmatized discourse generation from four aspects of cognitive attention. In this way, this model can fundamentally reveal the mechanism of producing stigmatized discourse in western media, so as to help others use western media's cognitive attention strategies to propose anti-stigmatized discourse strategies, and improve their international impression and status.

Secondly, critical cognitive linguistics aims at revealing the ideology and inequality behind discourse, and its foothold is to expose the reality and put forward improvement strategies from a realistic perspective, ignoring the cognitive processes and mechanisms of language production. The cognitive attention-proximization framework proposed by the present study does not only have the elements of critical discourse analysis, but also have the characteristics of cognitive linguistics to investigate the nature of language production. It can not only reveal the ideology behind the stigmatized

discourse but also illustrate the cognitive strategies used by western media and their language expressions of these strategies, which is useful for the stigmatized countries to understand the nature of stigmatized discourse and put forward effective anti-stigma strategies.

Next section will analyze the western media reports on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. After summarizing the generation processes of stigmatized discourse and cognitive attention strategies, it will explore the explanatory power of this analytical framework, providing new perspectives and ideas for the study of stigmatized discourse and anti-stigmatized discourse.

## 4. Application of the Model

### 4.1. Cognitive attention-space framework

On the cognitive attention-space level, the production processes of stigmatized discourse are as follows: (1) the western media at first focuses on the local events, mostly related to IDC interests, and places the rest of the information in the background; (2) then it frames the event in a negative semantic frame also as the background; (3) it uses three different modes of scalar adjustment and dynamic attention to adjust their focus and profile: firstly, it uses qualitative adjustment with abstract words to form some negative

expressions describing ODC; secondly, it uses quantitative adjustment, refines attention granularity combined with sequential scanning in order to pay attention to action details, and its attention window is only projected on the action itself to emphasize the behavior and influence of ODC's actions; thirdly, it uses quantitative adjustment to reduce the granularity of attention, and its attention window is only projected to the action results and objects by combining with summary scanning to emphasize the lasting harm and influence brought by ODC's actions.

In terms of language expressions reflecting these cognitive attention strategies, the above three different attention strategies and generation processes mainly use two linguistic forms. Negative nouns and negative noun phrases are used to refer to the stigmatized person or country. Negative action verbs or verb phrases are used to highlight the behavior and influence of the stigmatized person or country. Several examples are used to confirm these conclusions regarding linguistic and cognitive attention strategies.

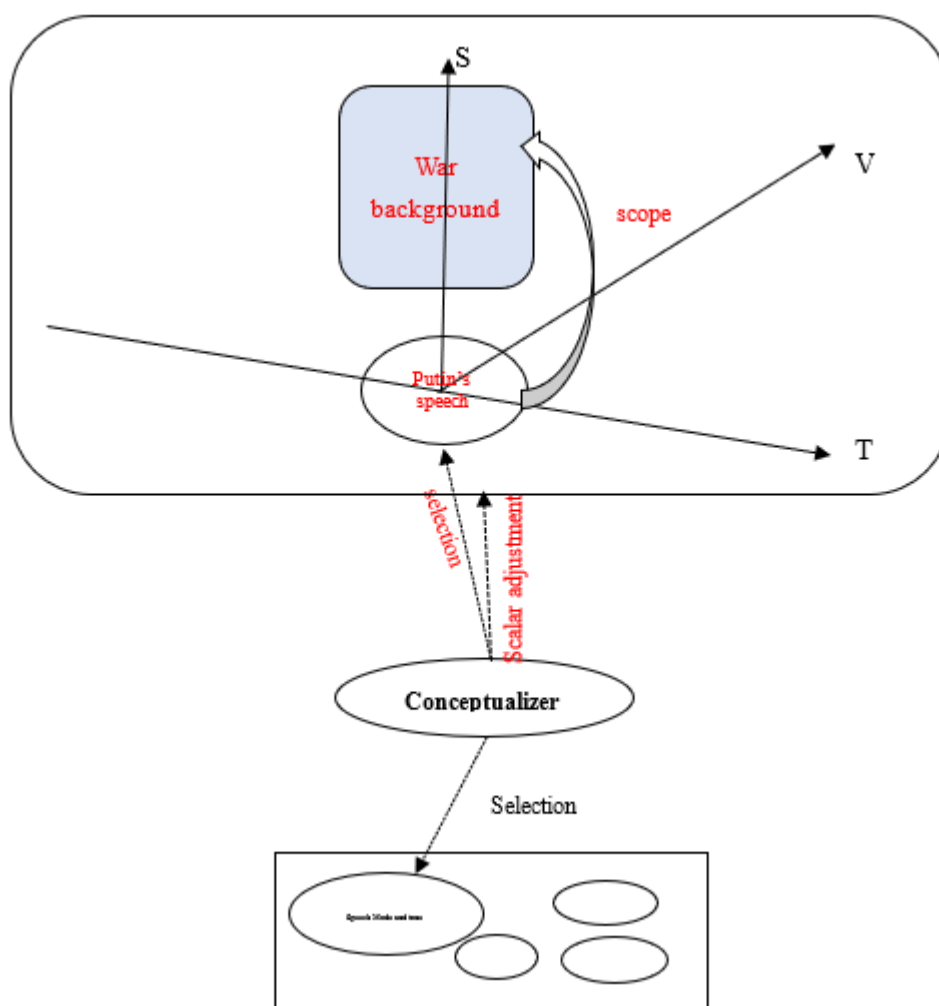
(1) *Russian forces have occupied the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, Europe's largest, since early after the invasion.* — Fox News, 2022.9.26

In (1), verb *occupy* profiles the approaching action of ODC to IDC and ODC's gradually occupation of the IDC's field. Nominalization form *invasion* is used to regard Russia's action as regression. These two negative words are used to stigmatize Russia and give public the impression that Russia invaded Ukraine and was the main mastermind behind this international conflict. The cognitive processes of creating

these stigmatized linguistic forms are: the attention at first is focused on the Russia's action. The report frames this action in the war background whose information is highly accessible. On the basis of this process, summary scanning for *invasion* and sequential scanning for *occupy* are both used to project the attention window on the action results, profiling the persistent impact of Russia's action in order to achieve the discourse purpose, that is to impose sanctions on Russia and restrict its actions.

(2) *Following recent battlefield setbacks, Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened last week to step up Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure. Throughout the war, Russia has targeted Ukraine's electricity generation and transmission equipment, causing blackouts and endangering the safety systems of the country's nuclear power plants.* — Fox News, 2022.9.26

In (2), western media repeatedly uses negative verbs to stigmatize Russia, such as *threaten*, *attacks*, *target*, *cause* and *endanger*. In the first sentence, *threaten* is used by focusing on the tone and manner of Putin's speech, putting the focus on the framework of war with a high accessibility (Graph 2). In addition, the attention window is mainly projected on Russia's action, action results and its influence, then scalar adjustment is employed with refined the granularity of attention in order to highlight the details. Then by using sequential scanning, the report can describe Putin's speech manner vividly and elaborately. All these attention strategies are used and combined systematically to guide readers' attention to Russia's evil deeds and threats.



Graph 2. Attention selection of stigma

Furthermore, in the second of sentence of (2), the word *cause* and *endanger* is produced by shifting dynamic attention from sequential scanning to summary scanning. Then, the western media changes their focus from Putin’s threatening discourse to Russia’s actions and its results with the limited attention window on the results and continuous influences of Russia’s actions. In addition, non-finite structure is used to cancel grounding elements in order to stress the continuity of the influence, that is to say, the continuous influence of Russia on Ukraine.

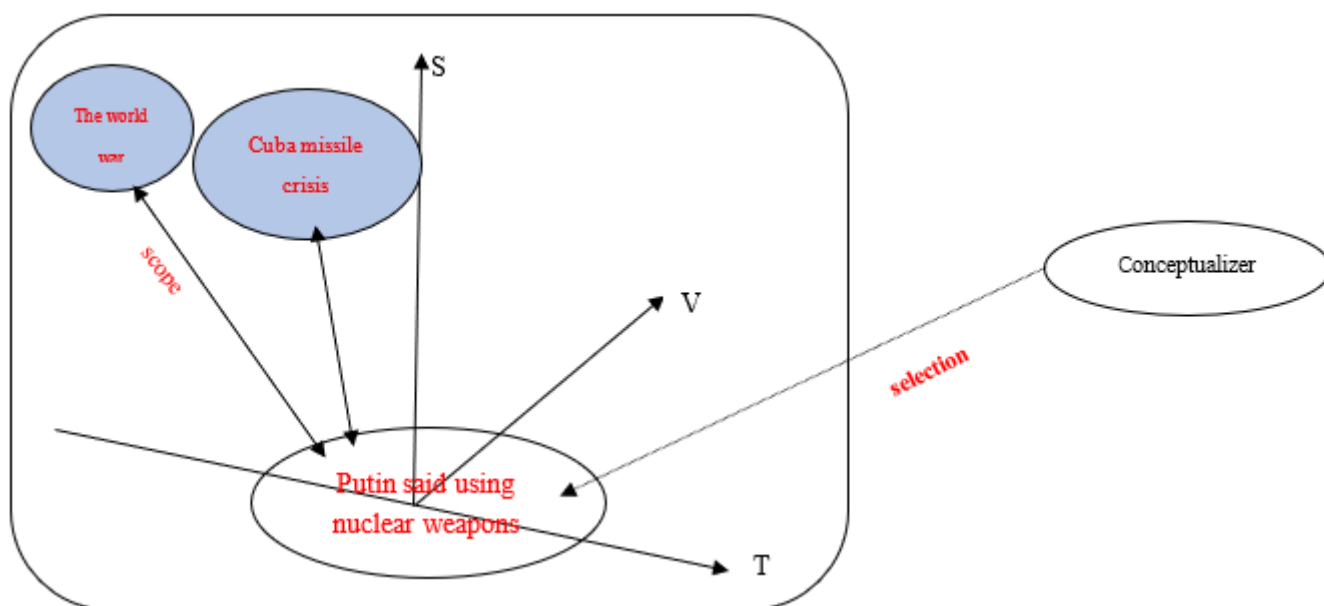
(3) *Russia has fined other foreign tech firms for not removing content, part of what critics say is a campaign by the Kremlin to restrict the influence of western technology companies, especially since Moscow sent its armed forces into Ukraine.* — Global News, 2022.10.18

The active voice of the verb *sent* emphasizes Russia’s initiation and willingness in causing the conflict between these two countries. Focus is on Russia’s sanctions against western companies by associating the sanctions with Russia’s march into Ukraine. Then western media relates their conflict to the background information of conflicts and wars existing in international relations. This background information is

highly accessible. Then attention window is projected on the action itself, with a refined granularity and a sequential scanning way to highlight that the war is initiated by Russia.

(4) *President Vladimir Putin said last month that Moscow was ready to use nuclear weapons if necessary to defend Russia’s “territorial integrity.” U.S. President Joe Biden said on Oct. 6 that his threat had brought the world closer to “Armageddon” than at any time since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, when many feared a nuclear war might be imminent.* — Global News, 2022.10.18

As shown in Graph 3, the western media uses *Armageddon* to stigmatize Putin’s behavior. *Armageddon* is metonymically used by the western media to define Putin’s actions and behaviors as launching a world war. In addition, the report also links the focus (Putin’s behavior) with the Cuban missile crisis, placing it under the semantic framework of the Cuban missile crisis and the world war, so as to induce readers to link these things together. Then, the western media refines the granularity of attention and uses sequential scanning to emphasize the huge threats and challenges that Russia has brought to the world security and peace.



**Graph 3.** Cognitive production processes of “The world war” stigma

(5) *Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla., warned “rhetoric matters a lot”, urging President Biden to be tough on Putin after he suggested during a recent “60 Minutes” interview that Ukraine would not win the war until Russian troops exit the country.* — Fox News, 2022.9.28

The conditional clause *wouldn’t win until exit* and the modal verb *would* all are used to highlight the fact that Russia is gradually approaching Ukraine, threatening Ukraine as well as their allies and causing great negative impacts in the future. When producing these two stigmatized sentences, the western media firstly puts their focus on the win or lose of the war, and describes Russia’s actions in a sequential scanning way. Then its attention window mainly focuses on the results of the actions, profiling Russia’s continuous influences and threats.

In general, on the basis of the above analysis, it makes clear that the production of stigmatized expressions in the western media is closely dependent on the cognitive attention strategies since differences in the aspects of value and

ideology form different cognitions and thinking manners. Under the framework of attention-space, western media usually adopts two cognitive attention strategies to manufacture stigmatized discourses: after focusing attention on the current event, it either uses negative verbs to profile the actions and relates this event action with some pessimistic historical or past events as the background information, then it uses sequential scanning and refined attention granularity to describe the action or its results which is the point of attention window; or it profiles the main participants of the event or the whole event, which is achieved with summary scanning and rough attention granularity.

## 4.2. Cognitive attention-time framework

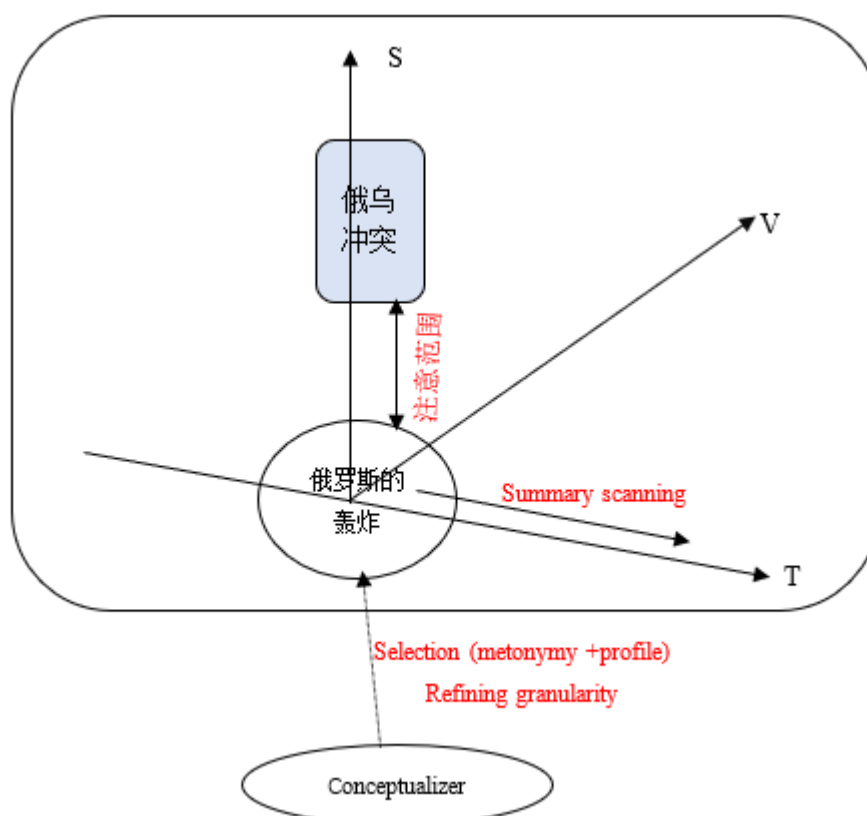
In the cognitive attention-time level, the production processes of stigmatized discourses are: after attention selection and background information is decided, there are two different ways of attention adjustment. One is that the

summary scanning is used to accentuate the persistent influence of action results; another is that sequential scanning is used to stress the action mode. For the second cognitive attention method, major language expressions are negative verbs, emphasizing the threat and danger brought by the stigmatized country or person.

The linguistic means used to express stigma are mainly modal verbs, present participles, the juxtaposition of simple past tense and present perfect tense, simple future tense or simple present tense. The present participle is used because summary scanning of dynamic attention is adopted so as to cancel the grounding elements such as tense with the purpose of underlining persistent influences and threats brought by the stigmatized person or country. The juxtaposition of past and present perfect tense is achieved by combining both

sequential scanning and summary scanning, which not only describes specific actions, but also emphasizes the continuous harm and influence of action results. The use of modal verbs, simple future or simple present tense mainly aims to accentuate actions in a sequential scanning way and to discredit the actions and behaviors of stigmatized people. In addition, negative verbs in the past continuous tense are also used under the influence of sequential scanning to emphasize that threats have always existed from the past to the present. Specific analysis examples are as follows.

(6) *Shelling has cut off the plant's transmission lines, forcing operators to shut down its six reactors to avoid a radiation disaster. Russia and Ukraine have traded blame for the strikes.* — Fox News, 2022.9.26



Graph 4. Analysis on “Russia’s shelling action”

(7) *Russia launched dozens of “kamikaze” drones, or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), on Ukraine on Monday, hitting energy infrastructure and killing five people in the capital Kyiv.* — Global News, 2022.10.19

The past tense verb *launched* and the present participles *hitting* and *killing* are both used because the western media selects the Russia’s bombing by drones as the attention focus, and it puts the attention window on the action and its results with the Russia-Ukraine conflict as the background information. Then, it refines the attention granularity and uses sequential scanning to describe the casualties caused by drone bombing. Furthermore, it only profiles one side’s actions and its results, deliberately stressing Russia’s malicious actions.

(8) *Ukraine’s Defense Ministry released a black-and-white video showing two large fireballs erupting one after the other in the dark, followed by incandescent showers of sparks, at 19 minutes after midnight.* — Fox News, 2022.9.26

Noun phrase *incandescent showers of sparks at 19 minutes* and the present participle *erupting* are used by the western

media who puts its attention window on the bombing action, profiling the concrete scene and consequence of this bombing.

(9) *But the proximity of the strike renewed fears that Russia’s nearly 7-month-long war in Ukraine might produce a radiation disaster.* — Fox News, 2022.9.24

Noun phrase *7-month-long-war* and the nominalization form *strike* indicate that the western media puts its attention selection and window attention only on the war and its persistent risks in order to profile Russia’s actions and influences. Then the western media relates the current attention focus with the war background and employs summary scanning and rough granularity to influence readers and force them to believe that this war is caused by Russia which will bring great impacts and threats to Ukraine and International community, even lead to nuclear radiation. In this way, its stigmatized discourses are legitimized and appropriate for public.

Generally speaking, similar to the spatial dimension, western media chooses to focus on local events to cut off the

association with the whole event and to profile the negative actions of ODC, and puts the local events in a negative semantic background, then it uses two different strategies in dynamic attention: (i) one is to use the summary scanning (such as the present perfect tense and the present participle) to emphasize the continuity of action; (ii) another one is to use sequential scanning or sometimes alternately use summary and sequential scanning. Then, in terms of attention granularity, western media tends to refine the granularity to highlight the details and project their attention window on the action itself and its results so as to purposefully report the events and make their stigmatized reports reasonable and acceptable by the public. Then it achieves its purpose of strengthening its own country's international status and weakening the international influence of countries with conflicts of interest.

### 4.3. Cognitive attention-value framework

On the cognitive attention-value level, the cognitive processes of stigmatized discourse manufacturing are: attention selection and the scope are similar to those in time and space level in that the focus (current event, e.g. Russia's bombing or action or even the conflict between Russia and Ukraine) is associated with a past or historical event to form background information which is usually familiar to the public and is highly accessible. However, in terms of attention granularity and dynamic attention, on this level, qualitative adjustment and summary scanning are the main methods, so the linguistic forms expressing such cognitive attention strategies are abstract and schematic words to describe the actions and practices of stigmatized people to achieve the stigma effect.

In addition, these cognitive attention strategies are also expressed by noun phrases, but also by specific nouns with definite articles and negative adjectives, which are the

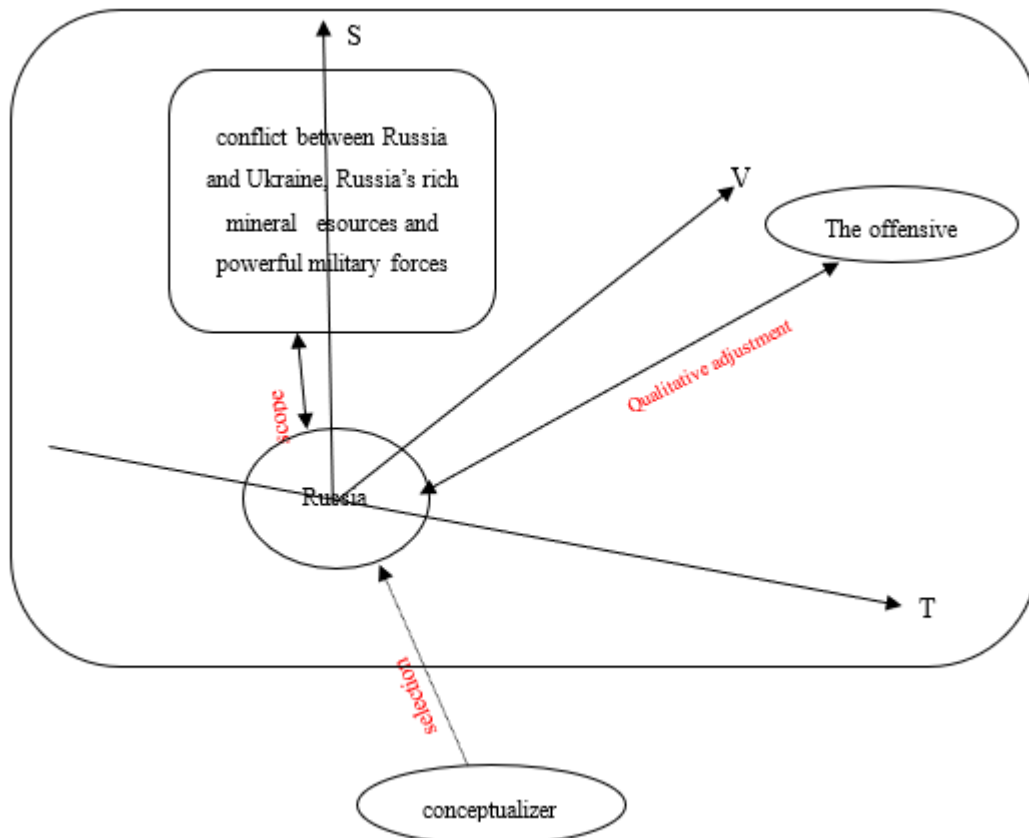
common means for IDC to maliciously label ODC in disguise. The specific analysis is as follows.

(10) *A Russian missile blasted a crater close to a nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine on Monday, damaging nearby industrial equipment but not hitting its three reactors. Ukrainian authorities denounced the move as an act of nuclear terrorism.* — Fox News, 2022.9.26

The verbs *blast, damage, hit* are all stigmatized expressions in the spatial level, which are created by using sequential scanning and refining granularity to accentuate the details. The noun phrase *nuclear terrorism* is a stigmatized expression on the value level which is produced by focusing attention on Russia's bombing and destruction and connecting this focus with terrorism. Then, the report employs qualitative adjustment to use abstract nouns to describe Russia's such actions in order to demonstrate the reason and appropriateness of this stigma.

(11) *Waltz joined FOX Business' "Varney & Co." on Monday to discuss the "issues" surrounding the offensive and what Ukrainian President Zelenskyy needs to prevail.* — Fox News, 2022.10.6

As shown in Graph 5, the stigmatized expression of example (11) is that ODC is interpreted as *the offensive*, and this stigma (adjective plus the determiner) is generated by using these different cognitive attention strategies: at first, western media's focus of attention is Russia, and the report chooses the conflict between Russia and Ukraine as well as Russia's rich mineral resources and powerful military forces as the background with a higher accessibility of information. Then, qualitative adjustment is used to use abstract adjective word *offensive* to induce readers to associate Russia with attack, cruelty and war, which changes readers' impression on Russia and therefore reduces Russia's influence and international status.



Graph 5. The analysis of Russia as the offensive

(12) *Putin is a monster*. — Fox News, 2022.10.8

(13) *We are seeing war crime after war crime be exposed as these areas are liberated, and Biden this week in the UN needs to be that clear that Putin is an absolute war criminal*. — Fox News, 2022.10.8

These two examples conceptualized Putin as a monster and a war criminal. The report focuses its attention on Putin and Russia, selects the conflict between Russia and Ukraine as the scope and frames this attention scope in a framework of war crime. In this war crime background, Putin is the criminal. Then, qualitative adjustment is employed to guide readers to consider Putin as the war mastermind and will threaten the world peace.

(14) *But the devastation left in Russia's wake has been akin to atrocities and alleged war crimes witnessed in other regained areas across Ukraine, like Bucha and Irpin*. — Fox News, 2022.10.8

This example is still conceptualizing Russia as the war criminal, a common stigma against Russia. Western media focuses on the results of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and chooses the war crime as the background. It regards Russia as the war mastermind and Ukraine as the victim. In order to legitimize its conceptualization and its stigmatized expression, western media chooses to report the event in a generalized and schematic way.

To sum up, after framing the background of attention focus, the western media mainly conceptualizes the focus from the perspective of abstract and schematic qualitative attention, and therefore these strategies are reflected in language in terms of negative noun phrases. These strategies are used to strengthen the rationality and acceptability of stigmatized expressions so as to achieve the purpose of imposing stigma on ODC.

#### 4.4. Summary

To sum up, the cognitive attention-proximization framework can explain the production processes and cognitive mechanisms of stigmatized discourse in western media, and also generalize the linguistic characteristics and strategies expressing these stigmatized expressions. In three levels of space, time and value, the cognitive generation processes and attention strategies of stigmatized expressions in western media are both similar and different.

The similarity lies in the fact that western media focuses their attention on ODC-related events, mainly profiles ODC's actions and its influences, and chooses some negative frames as the background for the profiled event. Moreover, the framework is usually a well-known and familiar event for readers with high accessibility of information, which induces readers to recognize and accept stigmatized words and to form a negative impression on the stigmatized country.

There are differences in attention scalar adjustment and dynamic attention. These three levels have some overlappings as well as divergences in these two aspects. On one hand, cognitive attention-spatial and temporal frames usually (i) refine attention granularity and use dynamic sequential scanning to conceptualize detailed actions and actions' results, or (ii) project their attention window only on the entire event and its results, then take a rough attention granularity and use summary scanning to conceptualize the focused event. On the other hand, cognitive attention-space and value frames describe the stigmatized country or person by using schematic and qualitative attention strategy.

The cognitive attention strategies in the cognitive attention-space framework are more diversified which is manifested in flexibly adjusting the attention scale and dynamic attention, while the attention strategies in the cognitive attention-value framework are relatively simple, partly due to the stigmatized object is an individual rather than an action or an event so that in this framework most of the time abstract and schematic attention methods are used to create stigmatized expression.

Based on different cognitive attention strategies and processes, stigmatized discourse has different language forms. In the cognitive attention-space frame, negative nouns/phrases and negative action verbs or verb phrases are the main linguistic strategies. In the cognitive attention-time frame, modal verbs, the present participle of verbs, the juxtaposition of simple past tense and present perfect tense, simple future tense or simple present tense, and the past continuous tense plus negative verbs are used to stigmatize others. In the cognitive attention-value frame, noun phrases and definite articles with negative adjectives are the major forms of stigmatized discourse.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the theory of cognitive attention and proximization theory, this paper establishes a cognitive attention-proximization analysis framework to analyze the stigmatized discourse. By analyzing these stigmatized texts about Russia-Ukraine conflict produced by western media, this study clearly reveals the cognitive processes and cognitive attention strategies in creating these stigmatized expressions and also demonstrates some common linguistic strategies used in employing these cognitive attention strategies. This case analysis shows that the framework has a strong explanatory power to analyze stigmatized discourse, which is helpful to discover the cognitive attention mechanisms and strategies used by western media to produce stigmatized discourse. The stigmatized countries and people can use these cognitive attention mechanisms and strategies to propose corresponding anti-stigma discourses, use the mass media to spread themselves properly, and increase communication methods and channels. All these methods facilitate these stigmatized countries to correct the adverse effects of stigmatized discourses on the public and the international community, to vindicate themselves internationally, and to enhance international discourse power and positive international influence.

There is still a lot of work to be done in the cognitive research on stigmatized discourse. This study only analyzes the cognitive attention processes and mechanisms of creating stigmatized discourse in mass media. Future research can use this analytical framework to analyze the speeches of western leaders, government documents, think tank discourse, etc., in order to explore the cognitive production processes of stigmatized expressions, and to further verify the explanatory power of this framework. In addition, this paper only explores stigmatized discourse from the perspective of cognitive attention, and future research can incorporate more cognitive factors, such as metaphor and categorization, into the analytical framework to more comprehensively analyze the cognitive processes and strategies of stigmatized discourse creation.

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