

CDA Approach to News Discourse on U.S.' Arms Sale to Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the different ideologies embodied in two newspapers through critical discourse analysis. By comparing the differences in lexical classification, transitivity and modality, this paper concludes that the New York Times hold certain bias towards the Chinese government.

Keywords: CDA; newspaper; ideology

1. INTRODUCTION

Critical discourse analysis was proposed by Fairclough in his book *Language and Power*. Aided by the theory of Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar, critical discourse analysis mainly focuses on revealing the hidden ideologies and power relation embodied in the text. News discourse, as a means of providing people with information, has been the research subject for many critical discourse analysts. News discourse, claiming to be objective, is actually often consists of a large number of ideologies which influence people's values and opinions. Thus, it is important to unveil the underlying ideologies in news discourse to avoid being controlled and misled.

This paper is set to present a critical discourse analysis, using the analytical tools based on Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar. With the analysis of two news discourses on U.S.' arms-sales to Taiwan, one from the New York Times and the other from China Daily, this paper aims to find out the different ideologies embodied in the mainstream newspapers of the United States and China. The paper will focus on the analysis of lexical classification, transitivity and modality.

The analysis will definitely unveil the hidden ideologies of the two newspapers, which actually represent the ideologies of the governments behind. In the media of western world, the international image of China is mainly portrayed by the New York Times. Although claiming to be objective, the New York Times shows its salient social and political bias towards China. China Daily, a state-owned English newspaper represents the ideological stance of Chinese government.

Moreover, this paper will provide useful advice for students to be more critical while reading English news articles to avoid being influenced by hidden ideologies.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Data Collection

Two news articles on the topic of U.S.' arms-sales to Taiwan downloaded respectively from the official websites of the New York Times and China Daily will be analyzed.

2.2. Research Questions

Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar will be the theoretical tool for this paper. The data will be analyzed in terms of three aspects, namely lexical classification, transitivity and modality.

1. What are the differences in lexical classification, transitivity and modality between the two newspapers?
2. What are the hidden ideologies embodied in the two newspapers?

3. DATA ANALYSIS

On Sept. 21, 2011, the U.S.' government made an announcement of a 5.8 billion U.S. dollars package of weapon sales to Taiwan. The Chinese people and government expressed strong discontent. Dispute between the Chinese government and the U.S.' government was stirred up. Both the Chinese media and the U.S.' media covered reports and paid continuing attention to this issue.

3.1. Lexical Classification

Halliday regards lexis as one of the main components of the ideational function of grammar. Different lexical choices are made based on different ideologies. Thus, the choices of words are essential to imply ideological stance of each newspapers.

TABLE I. DIFFERENT TERMS RELATED TO TAIWAN

<i>China Daily Terms</i>	<i>the New York Times Terms</i>
Taiwan	
the Taiwan Straits	
cross-Straits relations	the self-governing island
Relations across the Taiwan Straits	Taiwan's president Ma Ying-jeou
people across the Taiwan Straits	Taiwan a breakaway province
Close cross-Straits exchanges	

Table I shows a striking difference between the two newspapers when addressing terms related to Taiwan and the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan. In the news article of China Daily, terms such as "the Taiwan Straits, cross-straits relations" provide an impression of strong ties between Mainland China and Taiwan. Taiwan Strait is a 180km-wide strait, linking Mainland China and Taiwan. In geography, it is between Taiwan and Fujian province. By the choice of using the terms like "the Taiwan Straits, cross-straits relations", China Daily opposes its strong ideological stance and emphasis that Taiwan is an integral part of China. As a state-run newspaper, the lexical choice actually represents the ideology of the Chinese government and people that Taiwan is an inseparable part of Chinese territory, which is an indisputable fact. However, the terms used by the New York Times show a large difference compared with China. Terms such as "self-governed island, Taiwan's president, a breakaway province" indicate the political stance of the New York Times that it tries to split Taiwan from Mainland China. By using the term "self-governed island", the newspaper tries to express its belief that Mainland China has no political control over Taiwan. This indirectly shows that the New York times regards Taiwan as an independent island. What's more, the term "Taiwan's president", indicates the newspaper's ideology which is actually backed up by the U.S' government that Taiwan is independent country.

The different choices of words show clearly the political stance of each newspaper. It is obvious that the New York Times holds strong bias towards the Chinese government and deliberately uses hostile and sensitive words when describing the Taiwan issue.

3.2. Transitivity

According to Halliday, transitivity is a process of making participants---which is expressed by the noun phrase, processes---which is realized by the verb phrase in the clause, and circumstances associated with the process---which is typically expressed by adverbial and prepositional phrase. He identifies six types of processes, namely material process, mental process, relational process, behavioral process, verbal process, and existential process. Ideology

plays a key role in the selection of different types of processes. In addition, it determines the relationships between different participants and circumstances.

The analysis of transitivity will be focused on material process and verbal process which occur most frequently in the two articles. Material process is process of doing. It is made between active participant who acts and passive participant who is acted on. Verbal process is process of saying. Examining the material and verbal processes in the articles will enable us to have a clear understand of the notion of "who's doing what to whom" and "who's saying what to whom".

TABLE II. EXAMPLES OF MATERIAL PROCESSES IN CHINA DAILY

<i>Material Processes in China Daily</i>			
	Participant	Process	Participant
1	Chinese Vice Foreign Minister	was instructed to summon	the U.S. Ambassador to China
2	The wrongdoing by the U.S. side	will inevitably undermine	bilateral relations
3	The wrongdoing by the U.S. side	severely violates	the three Sino-U.S. joint communique
4	It (the arms sales to Taiwan)	severely undermines	China's national security
5	the United States	does not fulfill	such a commitment in the communique
6	People across the Taiwan Straits	have all benefited from	the increasingly close cross-straits and the international community exchanges
7	The new round of U.S. arms sales	cannot hide	the intention of interfering China's internal affairs
8	Sino-U.S. relations	have made	progress in line with both countries' long-term interests
9	The U.S. side	should cherish	the hard-won situation and work with China
10	Nobody	can sway	the strong will of the Chinese government and people

Table II summarizes some of the material processes in the news article of China Daily. As is shown in the table, U.S.' participants are in dominant positions as "Actors". By putting U.S. participants in the "actor" positions, China Daily tries to imply that U.S. is responsible for the deterioration of Sino-U.S. relation. Moreover, it tries to indicate that U.S. does interfere in China's internal affairs on the Taiwan Issue. Examples 2, 3,4,5,7 suggest the wrongdoings and their consequences by America. Although

the arms deal is between U.S. and Taiwan, the article by China Daily does not mention Taiwan's responsibilities. Instead, in examples 2, 3,4,5,7, the article puts U.S. to be actors who are responsible for the issue. This indirectly delivers the hidden ideology of China Daily that Taiwan Issue is China's internal affair and any interference in this issue will get fierce reaction from the Chinese government. However, as a big nation, in pursuit of harmony and peace, China is always seeking peaceful solution in international disputes. In example 8, instead of putting U.S. in the subject position, China and U.S. are put together to show that China still regards U.S. as a friend and cherishes the friendly relationship between the two countries. This indicates the Chinese government's ideology of constructing a harmonious society. China Daily wants to display China with a big nation image.

TABLE III. EXAMPLES OF MATERIAL PROCESSES IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

<i>Material Processes in The New York TIMES</i>			
	Participant	Process	Participant
1	Confirmation of a 5.8 billion package of weapons	drew	angry reaction from China
2	The American ambassador	were summoned	(by China Foreign Ministry)
3	In the end it probably	won't affect	the overall bilateral relationship
4	Party leaders	are eager to avoid	any self-imposed fraught
5	Vice President Xi Jinping	prepares to visit	the United States
6	China	should retaliate with more than just words	(to U.S.)
7	China	should learn from Russia and take revenge	(to U.S.)

Table III shows some of the material processes in the article of the New York Times. We can clearly see that the material processes in the New York Times differ greatly from the ones in China Daily. Actually, in the whole text, U.S. has seldom become the dominant participant. Instead, it makes the transitivity choices by putting China related terms such as "Party leaders, Vice President" as the actors. It shows that the New York Times cunningly shifts the focus from U.S.' wrongdoing to Chinese political change. At the same time, it avoids putting U.S. in a "responsible" position. By choosing different material processes and putting Chinese government and leaders in the subject positions, the New York Times wants to mislead people and construct a negative image of China as a country full of frauds and political problems. It shows a strong bias towards the Chinese government which is represented by the Communist Party.

TABLE IV. EXAMPLES OF VERBAL PROCESSES IN CHINA DAILY

<i>Verbal Processes in China Daily</i>			
	Participant	Process	Participant
1	China	expressed	strong indignation and resolute opposition
2	Zhang Yesui	also lodge	strong protest on behalf of the Chinese government (Chinese ambassador to U.S.)
3	China	strongly urges	the United States to be fully aware of
4	He (Chinese Vice Foreign Minister)	asked	the U.S. to stop arms sales to Taiwan
5	Ma Zhaoxu	said in a written statement	there is only one China
6	He (Ma) to Taiwan.	also urged	the United States to stop selling weapons to Taiwan

Table IV shows some of the verbal processes in the article of China Daily. In the article, most of the "Sayers" are China and Chinese government officials. Those verbal processes demonstrate the idea that China urges U.S. to stop arms sales to Taiwan. By putting government officials whose words represent the ideology of the Chinese government in the Sayers position, China Daily indicates the hidden ideology that China takes the Taiwan Issue very serious and will not tolerate the interfering wrongdoing of U.S.

TABLE V. EXAMPLES OF VERBAL PROCESSES IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

<i>Verbal Processes in China Daily</i>			
	Participant	Process	Participant
1	with newspaper editorials	accusing	the Obama administration
2	the Foreign Affairs Ministry	warning of	serious harm to relations
3	Xinhua	called	the decision a despicable breach of faith
4	Clayton Dube	said	at a time like this no one wants to get saddled with a major diplomatic failure

Table V demonstrates some of the verbal processes made by the New York Times. The Sayers of most verbal processes are Chinese officials and state-run news media. In contrast, there is no official "saying" in the article. By doing this, the New York Times tries to construct a negative

image of China, which is easily to be angry and with little tolerance. The underlying ideology is very obvious that the New York Times attempts to undermine China's international image.

3.3. Modality

Modality can be used to investigate the interpersonal functions of language. In general, modality reveals the speaker's judgment of how likely or certainly a proposition is. Modality is realized by modal verbs, modal adverbs and so on.

In the article from the New York Times, modal verbs are more used to describe the Chinese government. For example, "Chinese leaders were carefully calibrating a response that would register displeasure with the White House" The modal verb "would" refers to high possibility of the displeasure. By using this modal verb, the New York Times tries to construct an irritable China. Another example is "is a serious irritant to Chinese leaders, who must balance ". The high modal verb "must" expresses that Chinese leaders are obligated to balance the three party relations between China, Taiwan and the United States. By using modal verbs, the New York Times, puts China to an obligatory and responsible role in this dispute. On the contrary, the reports by China Daily use a lot of "will" to put the United States in an obligatory position. Examples such as "he wrongdoing by the U.S. side will inevitably undermine bilateral relations" "the United States will not seek to carry out a long-term" "The new round of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan will send very wrong signals, will severely disturb the momentum ". By using high modal "will", China Daily shows how certainly it believes that bad consequences will be brought by U.S.' wrongdoing. At this point, China Daily clearly expresses its ideological stance.

4. CONCLUSION

After examining the lexical classification, transitivity patterns and modality of the two articles, this paper finds that newspaper discourses are not objective as they claim. In fact, different ideologies are embodied in different news articles. China Daily represents the ideologies of the Chinese government that there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is an integral part of China. The New York Times holds strong bias toward the Chinese government and stands for the U.S.' government's ideology that they will continuously interfere in Taiwan Issue.

By applying CDA approach to the two articles, this paper has clearly illustrated the hidden ideologies embodied in the news discourse. Taiwan is an integral part of China, which is an indisputable fact. I hope that this paper will be helpful for students to be more critical while reading newspaper articles. At any time, students should take responsibility for defending Chinese' integrity of sovereignty and territory.

However, this paper has some limitations. Further study should collect more articles. Moreover, more analytical

tools should be used to present a more comprehensive critical discourse analysis.

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