Representation of the Gender Role Differentiation on We-media in China

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Abstract. With the increasing of online users, the numerous questions about discourse gender differences have raised significantly. The intended gender-free equality of Internet has been challenged by numerous studies, and far-reaching differences have been found in online communications. Corpus of previous studies focused mostly on the macro level, such as: books, newspaper editorials and other articles. And perspectives of most previous studies mainly focused on the external, obvious characteristics of each gender, such as using different vocabulary, syntax, tone and so on. This study aims to analyze the reinforcement of gender differentiation and gender non-conforming expressions on We-media in China. The methodological approach includes gathering online data, online review, preprocessing collected reviews and a discourse analysis of documents features to extract the differences between male and female articles posted by official account on We-media. Findings reveal men are objective, independent, creative and initiative and authoritative, which sees men as order-givers and decision-makers. While in women's shows that they are sensitive, passive, focusing on inner feelings change.

Keywords: We-media · gender role differentiation · China · discourse analysis

1   Introduction

With the tremendously increased innovation of technology, admittedly, mass media has become a significant component of our daily life, which can't be neglected. As Snow and Benford (1988) claim that mass media plays a key role in solving problems, offering specific solutions, seeking reasons, and making moral judgement (P.199). Based on the latest technology, many new types of media have been created rapidly, which have taken place the role and status of traditional media to many degrees. According to the Statistical Reports on Internet Development in China, the total number of internet users in China reached 0.802 billion people and more than 0.778 billion people use the mobile phone to connect to the internet. Undoubtedly, socio-media, as a major part of mass media, inevitably shapes and alludes to the public value and social attitude. The world's largest net users' group is the solid foundation for the improvement of those new types of media, especially We media in China. There were more than 10,000 thousand WeChat official accounts by the end of 2017. Observations the expressions of grammatical features between males and females has been restricted, such as the differences between

masculine and feminine in morphology in many languages. As women and men are different preferences and the feasibility of predicting gender using a set of frequent key terms. (Teso & Olmedilla & Martínez & Toral, 2010). Though there have been enormous claims regarding the obsolescence of the male and female binary in the light of modern movements of gender emancipation, this tradition of using gender as a medium of categorization has been historically a very strong form of discourse analysis (MacIntyre & Babin & Clément, 1999). The professional stature of women has altered significantly over the last few years, and this feature is particularly interesting to map gender imagery in sync with the societal changes (Eisend, 2010). Other researchers hold gender representations in social media among young people are now moving toward gender free equality (Monica & Tatiana & Graziela, 2016). These findings are significant markers because men and women redefine their identities following the messages conveyed in social media and, therefore, scholars often scrutinize gendered images depicted in social media with a critical aperture (Manago, 2013).

Moreover, a great number of studies based on content analysis concerned with gender construction in mass media have been conducted by investigators, when they are aware of the significant effect of media discourse on sociological domain. It also has a paucity of work in gender role investigations in Chinese social media. Though there has been a research done on gender portrayals in social media with focus on female discourse analysis (Wu Yi, 2014), there has been no specific study done exclusively on gender issues on We-media form WeChat public account in China.

The purpose of this paper is to reveal the current gender differentiation concealed in We-media discourse, studying how and what kind of gender identities are constructed respectively with the help of linguistic tool and discussing what kind of social ideologies are reflected in the term of these gender identities constructed in we-media discourse. In order to explore gender identity features constructed in advertising discourse, this thesis will be analyzed from CDA perspective with following questions: (1) How different gender identities are constructed respectively on We-media discourse of the top six popular We-media Public Account in the thirty days? (2) What different characteristics of gender identity are constructed respectively in the We-media discourse? (3) What kind of social ideologies are reflected in the term of these gender identities constructed with the help of linguistic devices?

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) was founded by British linguist Halliday in the late 1950s. Halliday (1985) holds that language has three basic functions: ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction. These three functions are respectively related to Transitivity system, mood system and theme system. Systemic functional grammar divides language into five levels: context, meaning, words, sound structure and phonetics. Meaning is not only the central level, but also a system. The speaker can only choose the appropriate meaning in the meaning system. Systemic-functional grammar is systematic and functional. It pays more attention to aggregation

than combination, while Chomsky pays more attention to combination. Efforts to link language functions and structures are innovations.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to "the critical linguistic approach of scholars who find the larger discursive unit of text to be the basic unit communication". Norman Fairclough, is renowned as one of the founders of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Fairclough (1997) holds that sociocultural analysis can only be enriched by the textural evidence, which is partly linguistic and partly intertextual partly a matter of how links between on text and other texts and text types are inscribed in the surface of the text. He suggests three dimensions of discourse: text, discourse practice (i.e. text construction, allocation and utilization) and sociocultural practice (discourse in relation to ideology and hegemony) and three correlated layers of CDA analysis: CDA description (analysis of text), CDA interpretation (analysis of discourse practice) and CDA explanation (analysis of sociocultural practice).

TeunA. Van Dijk argues that CDA "focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination". CDA is a framework on the interrelationship between language, power and ideology with a special focus on explanation of how power manipulates and transfers discourse practice and how discourse increasingly contributes to the reproduction of macro-structures. Teun A. van Dijk (1997) formulates a discourse-cognition-society triangle in which "discourse "is the discursive event, "cognition "refers to personal or social cognitions, and "society "ranges from personal levels to institutional, cultural, political and societal levels.

I first present how an influential research background for the gender roles. After reviewing the relevant literature, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be presented, including Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework of Discourse, principles of CDA and Systemic Functional Grammar, serving as the theoretical foundation. Research instruments and procedure of data analysis are presented. In the second part of the thesis, I illustrate how data analysis focusing on the differentiation and the construction with particular emphasis on their posted topic and the content on We-media. I also show the social ideologies reflection for the gender identities construction.

3 Methodology

Given the growing popularity of the Internet, we-media is a major communication way as well as its potential to allow for various coverage, we choose to study whether gendered is presented on We-media. WeChat, one of the largest online media in China and in the world. In order to do the research, the author applied corpus based research method by collecting the content.

Participants: According to the WeChat Annual Report 2017, choose the top six popular We-media Public Account (WPA) which the number of fans have reached more than ten thousand. These six owners of the We-media are three males (Luoji Thinking; Zhanhao; Tongdao Uncle), three females (Papi Girl; Lemon Tree; Mimeng).

Data Gathering Procedure: The present thesis partly chooses the 30 days of September, 2018 published post of the six top popular public account on we-media. After read the articles, and talk to the owners for the deep interview with mobile phone, Email, QQ or WeChat.

Data Analysis: With the key topics and language of their posted articles which present gender roles and gender-marked attitudes on these posts will be analyzed. This thesis qualitatively investigates the 30 days' articles of the subjects' posted to analyze how men and women are represented on We-media to do the deep analysis about how gender roles are represented from the different topics and language pattern. Whether they are represented as typically feminine or masculine, which has been the case in previous studies within the field, is worth being looked at. Since the aim of this thesis is to describe and discuss how the two genders, male and female are represented on We-media. Our prime research question is of a descriptive nature.

4   Findings and Discussion

For all viewpoints in the current study, the presentation between men and women are very different from aspects. Gender configuration and the identity are the complex subjects; the process of the module will be developed day by day. This identity is constantly unfinished and influenced by different social frameworks where people interact in their daily life. Tannen (2010) explains that a double standard is in operation. While there is very few clear cases of sexism and gender roles, particularly on we-media, it seems that there is quite an inclusive, non-gender connotation on these websites. For example, when in talking, woman's speech style is a powerless style, subordinate in phonology, lexis and syntax whereas men pay more attention to context and the effectiveness of their communication requires compensatory behavior. (Lakoff, 1996).

4.1   The Construction of Gender Identity on We-media

The interaction can show the social identity be negotiated through the discourse; it not just occurs in males but also females. Men and women's conversational styles just like the dual cultures which explain two different models in terms of the two segregated subcultures (Deborah, 1992). The relationship between media discourse and gender identity, can be seen as interrelationship. To begin with, everyone primarily builds his or her gender identity by the information expressed by discourse, which, of course, include advertising discourse (Apoorva, 2017). Powerful discourses circulate in and via social structures and institutions, and shape desires, making some ways of being more possible than other." What's more, what and how one selects to speak, mainly depends on specific gender identity. The presentation of masculine and feminine styles is equally valid and it reveals two distinct cultural dialects rather than as inferior or superior ways of speaking (Tannen, 2010).

In order to interact with each other and maintain relationships with the audience, the users of the social networking always post the articles which they are interested in or cared about. When considering online environments, a great deal of convenience is provided for the different users. Self-presentation is applicable not only to face to face

interactions, but also online environment (Zhao & Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). The ease of online communication allows people to interact with more people with less effort expended, which results in individuals maintaining relationships they would be unable to manage face to face.

A particular case for this view, Cameron (2001: 170) illustrates that "Whatever else we do with words, when we speak, we are always telling our listeners something about ourselves." Above all, discourse, certainly, can be used to study people's value from the perspective of gender identity, and reflect social ideology. Gender identity as a socially constructed approach prescribes that girls and women talk very little, so even if they talk less than men but go beyond the prescribed limits, they are seen as talking too much. In addition, women's speech may be negatively evaluated because the topics women have traditionally been preoccupied with (children, relationships, household tasks) were dismissed as trivial or mere gossip.

4.2   The Characteristics of Gender Identity on We-media

A hegemonic masculinity and femininity characteristic men and women, and they can be acceptable and ordinary members in their own culture (Edward & Hamilton, 2004). Because of the society pressures, there are complex and uncertain factors will be naturally marked in the communication process. Lakoff's (1975) work as stronger expletives are reserved for men; weaker expletives are reserved for women; Women's speech is politer than man's; Topics that are considered trivial or unimportant are women's domain; Women use 'empty' adjectives (adorable, charming, divine, nice) (Table 1).

As is vividly illustrated in the table in Table 2, it is quite easy to find out the general tendency on men and women' topic when choice of post process is made. In the selection of material process. Obviously, three female post the topic about daily life more than 70%, especially Lemon Tree, post around 76%. Whereas the phenomenon is very different in males, they pay more attention to the public issues and rarely post their private life on the We-media. For example, Zhanhao post more than 75% articles which are related to the public issues, but only 15% for the daily life. Therefore, the accommodation and opposition to gender roles take place.

Material process refers to the experience of the external world, which means semantically that actor is the element the speaker portrays as the one who does the deed

Table 1. The Distribution of Subjects

Name	Gender	Post articles
Papi Girl	Female	69
Luoji Thinking	Male	123
Mimeng	Female	49
Tongdao Uncle	Male	62
Zhanhao	Male	52
Lemon Tree	Female	21

Table 2. Topic Choice Pattern of Men and Women

Name	Daily life	Public Issue	Others
Papi Girl	49	9	11
Luoji Thinking	28	81	14
Mimeng	35	8	6
Tongdao Uncle	11	41	10
Zhanhao	8	39	5
Lemon Tree	16	3	2

(Halliday, 2000). Therefore, the significance of these choice lies in different identity construction, in which men consumers are seen as actors or creators more than women. When compared with women ads, men ads highlight male initiative to a higher degree. In the choice of this process, women ads are not that obvious, which shows that the overall women ads do not pay much attention to female creativity and initiative. In the selection of this process, the female advertising is not obvious, which reflects the overall female advertising prominent women themselves do not pay attention to creativity and initiative.

4.3 The Reflection of Social Ideologies of Gender Identities on We-media

Talking with different gender can be gendered in multiple ways, and that both women and men can draw on feminine' and 'masculine' discursive strategies depending on the particular interactional context. Walther (2007) and Shirley (2013) stat that women are positioned powerfully within discourses as gatherers of diverse. The evidence that the expressions and communication of emotion can be—either facilitated or inhibited by the presence of others, depending on the nature of the emotional stimulus and of the personal or social relationship with the other or others. Chit (2012) holds that the multiple interpretations of a woman's linguistic behavior in terms of (im)politeness.

From the post content from the six subjects, Through Critical Discourse Analysis of the topic chosen, it is not difficult to discover that the content of these posts embodies gender differentiation. Women in the We-media are often put onto a passive position. The value of women lies in personal life, trivial perspective. Whereas men always enjoy and comment on the public issues. Compared with female image in We-media, the value of men is not restricted in appearance and age, but in wisdom and successful career. The male role in socio-media is often the pioneer of initiative and creativity in society, who is so-called successful people, dominating the relation of both sexes. The adverse culture carried in We-media will definitely have a harmful impact on public's view about women and affect female understanding of the role of female identity as well.

5   Discussion the Causes of Gender Differentiation on We-media

The reason why women 'focus is different from men on We-media above mainly due to the following two aspects: long-term of the view about gender both in Western society and Eastern society and catering the target fan's needs.

5.1   Inherent Social Concept of Gender

According to the records in "Bible", Eve (on behalf of women) comes from Adam's (on behalf of men) rib. This claim has been widely accepted by Westerners. At the same time, Western society has unconsciously recognized the fact that women are subordinate to men. In this case, women inevitably become the "second sex". Since ancient times, the ideology of male supremacy which thinks that women are inferior to men has ingrained. Although the US professional women have become an important force in the creation of social wealth, women still cannot play a central role in social role. The subordinate position to men has never been changed.

In patriarchal cultures, women are in the place of being criticized, or appreciated. It can be said that any distortion of the female image, in fact, belongs to the category of male expectations. As thinkable and competent social existence, both women and men share social activities. These positive aspects are often overlooked. Therefore, when choose to post articles on We-media, female always like to show their own life and trivial issues, because of the patriarchal culture, so that men and women do not get a same division of attention has been aptly reflected on We-media. Socio-media creates a virtual world, influences the real world and is affected at the same time.

5.2   Catering the Target Fan's Needs

We-media is a paid way of mass media, aiming at appealing and persuading the netizen. A successful official account means to communicate successfully with potential audience, so what kind of articles are most concerned is how to succeed in this particular communication. For the women netizen, the attention mainly about privacy exploring, make up. Delicacy, titillation and entertainment. However, male netizens are likely to choose browse the hot events which are related to economy, politics and science.

The official account on We-media as a commercial activity, the ultimate goal is to attract more fans. To win potential audience of a specific culture, the use of generally accepted cultural values is very important to communicate with them. Thus, We-media has become a mirror of society. However, the image of women above well responds to the core values of both Western society and Chinese society, which exactly explains the reason for the endless stream of similar socio-media language. Thus, by catering to the patriarchal culture, the hosts of the official account on We-media stretch the potential ability to attract the audiences' interest to be their fans.

6   Conclusion

This study is a tentative endeavor to investigate the gender role differentiation on We-media in China. Based on a detailed discourse analysis with some relevant theories, the research results contain both academic layer and social layer. On the one hand, from

what has been discussed above, we may safely draw the conclusion that, more article processes are used in Chinese female posts such as private life, make up, delicacy, titillation and entertainment, whereas male choose to post the topic just like economy, politics, science or other related masculine domains. The results of this study shows that men are objective, independent, creative, initiative, authoritative and often connected with power, high-technology, which sees men as order-givers and decision-makers. To a certain extent, female identity in women post articles has materialized tendency, which further demonstrates the characteristics of women are more willing to be associated with others. On the other hand, language in men's official account is short, serious, clear and official. In particular, men ads tend to apply more technological words and term, which show images of man are professional and knowledgeable. What's more, short imperative sentences construct the identity of men as order-givers and decision-makers. However, in women's articles, the sentences are more complicated, longer and more like private talk. They are less serious and formal than language in men post content. And women's images are less professional.

Although the above study with strong views, its shortcomings cannot be ignored. To begin with, due to the limitation of current resources, this thesis is far from comprehensiveness and profundity. What's more, the study only focuses on six official account owner of the We-media which analyses the 30 days' articles. The conclusion, of course, somewhat relative and not strongly persuasive in the construction of gender role differentiation on We-media. The study aims at men and women respectively would be better, more obvious and conclusive.

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