

Chinese Discourse Construction in “Belt and Road” Initiative Publicity-Oriented Reports

Zhan Shaoxia

Xuzhou University of Technology, Xuzhou, Jiangsu, China

Keywords: Chinese discourse, Discourse function, Lexical and grammatical function, “belt and road”, Chinese media

Abstract: The “Belt and Road” Initiative is China’s grand strategy for globalization in the new era, which is crucial to the realization of the Chinese dream. Before some fallacies issued by some western media on China’s “Belt and Road” strategy, Chinese news media have to seize the position of discourse power of the “Belt and Road” publicity-oriented reports and strongly refute against them. Aiming at some problems in Chinese media’s publicity-oriented reports, this paper aims to study the construction of Chinese discourse combined with textual functions, lexical and grammatical functions, so that Chinese media can give full play to their own advantages, employ “Chinese discourse to express China”, and “China Discourse to move audiences home and abroad”.

1. Introduction

Due to various differences in social circumstances, national cultures, etc. among the countries along the “Belt and Road”, the understanding of the “Belt and Road” is somewhat inadequate in the world. In the context of media integration, Chinese media have proactively launched the “Belt and Road” communication campaign and employed publicity-oriented reports to provide a real and comprehensive “Belt and Road” for foreigners. However, there are still some problems with Chinese media’s publicity-oriented reports. Taking “people.cn” as an example, as one of the major media in China, it should take advantage of the Internet to make up for the shortcomings in technology and data of Chinese media’s publicity-oriented reports. However, on the analysis of the content of “Belt and Road” reports, “people.cn” does not give full play to its own advantages, and there are still certain shortcomings in terms of specific coverage, diction, and transfer of thinking.

1.1 The Insufficient Coverage

“All Media Platform” of “One Belt, One Road” special channel on the homepage of “people.cn” focuses too much on the timeliness of news, with less coverage in some sections, mainly recording facts, and less description and argument, which lead to the lower attention to the topics and descending influence, thus, are not conducive to the “Belt and Road” initiative to promote the publicity, or no effect on the transfer of thinking.

1.2 The One-Way Transfer of Thinking

Although the media forms of new media are employed in “people.cn” to cover “Belt and Road” reports, it continues the traditional one-way linear communication method, thus, failing to integrate both domestic and international perspectives, only focusing on international communication, short of the standpoint of rationality, objectivity, and justice, which is liable to cause misunderstandings on international public opinions.

1.3 The Fuzzy Diction Focus

The “Belt and Road” initiative covers a wide range of regions, covering economic, cultural, and infrastructure cooperation. With the influence of differences in ideology, values, and cultural cognition, “Belt and Road” publicity-oriented reports lacks high-frequency vocabulary in “people.cn”, which is insufficient to highlight the participants and their core vision.

2. Narrating the “Belt and Road” Initiative in Chinese Discourse

As is known, Chinese discourse is essentially a theoretical expression of Chinese characteristics, a theoretical upgrade of Chinese experience, and the discourse presentation of the Chinese theory, after all, a modern Chinese version. The Chinese media’s publicity-oriented reports are an important window for Chinese images, and conducive to breaking the monopoly of Western media. The Chinese discourse in “Belt and Road” publicity-oriented reports should answer some basic questions such as “who is speaking”, “how to speak”, “what to say”, “speak for whom”, and “how to talk”, etc. At the same time, it should aim at revealing the “Chineseness” and dispel the “Westernness”, restoring the missing “Chineseness”, removing the “Westernness” arbitrarily attached to China, and starting to shape China’s image in Chinese discourse at the new era [1].

If the positive voice is displayed in “Belt and Road” construction to influence the Western public opinions against China, its publicity cannot avoid lexical grammar and discourse functions. As for discourse functions, Halliday held that the basic unit of language in actual use was not a grammatical unit such as a word or a sentence, but a “discourse” expressing relatively complete ideas, in which its form was cohesive and its semantics coherent, and both the conceptual and interpersonal functions of language needed to be realized through discourse. This is the metafunction of discourse. Discourse functions connect language with context, so that speakers can only generate discourses that are consistent and proportionate to the situation. Regarding lexical grammar, John Singler pointed out in the corpus linguistic theory that lexical grammar theory focused on the description and verification of positivism, and cognitive research on the rationale of linguistic structure [2]. The description of the syntactic personality of a term is reflected in vocabulary that is integrated by the distribution and transformation characteristics of the words when they are formed into the sentence. When using language, people are not only restricted by grammatical rules, but also by the choice of vocabulary. Therefore, in publicity-oriented reports, Chinese discourse must be combined with both lexical grammar and discourse functions to achieve better results.

3. Promoting the “Belt and Road” Initiative in Chinese Discourse

Promoting the development of the “Belt and Road” is an immense challenge for Chinese media, which is particularly important to improve the ability of international communication and build a foreign discourse system in accordance with the trend of the times, involvement in global governance, and defense of national interests. From the perspective of constructing the “Belt and Road” international publicity, taking the realization of Chinese discourse as a combination of lexical grammar and discourse function as an example, to build China’s current international discourse power system, and to explore the basis of the constraints behind the real dilemma to achieve the shifts from rising concepts to sharing concepts, from political stigma to cultural attraction, from the same communication to differential communication, etc. in international communication strategies [3].

3.1 Achieving Both the Conceptual and Interpersonal Functions in Discourse

1) First of all, in order to realize the conceptual function, the concept of the “Belt and Road” concept should be clarified in publicity-oriented reports. “Belt and Road” initiative was proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, namely, “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, with the basis of the ancient Chinese Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road, which runs the central cities of various countries, through Asia, Europe, and Africa, connecting the dynamic East Asian economic circle and the developed European economic circle, and creating economic corridors with mutual economic assistance and common growth. Also, Xi proposed that publicity reports should strengthen the building of international communication capacity, the right to speak internationally, concentrate on telling Chinese stories, optimize the strategic layout, and strive to create a flagship media with profound international influence. However, some countries have interpreted the “Belt and Road” initiative as an overly politicized issue, fearing that the “Belt and

Road” initiative is a political infiltration by Chinese government. As reported by the German “Frankfurt Report” on January 31, “Belt and Road” initiative was not only the infrastructure construction, but also China’s vision of globalizing the Chinese symbol. “Belt and Road” initiative adopted by Chinese government has mainly extended economic and political penetration far beyond mere infrastructure construction. Thus, China’s publicity-oriented reports should construct a combination of Chinese discourse and discourse functions to clarify the concept of “Belt and Road”.

The combination of constructing Chinese discourse and discourse concepts and functions should be established on the emphasis on “win-win”, and make clear “what you want to do” in the simplest logic and language, not based on other party’s approval and affection, but on “what we are doing and what we want to get”, to candidly clarify China’s interests and demands, and provide a more flexible atmosphere for cooperation. In the publicity of “Belt and Road”, China’s international publicity media should not focus on the expression of “responsibility”, but clearly and concretely of China’s interests and demands, so that certain Western forces have “nowhere to distort”, which can act as a long-term strategy for Chinese media’s international publicity. “People’s Daily” reported, “During the two sessions, Premier Li Keqiang talked directly and pertinently that our assistance to developing countries, especially underdeveloped countries, was within our ability, no involvement in political infiltration. Our visits and international exchanges were for a peaceful and stable international and surrounding environment, focusing on the solution to livelihood issues, and opportunities for China’s development.”

2) Secondly, in order to achieve interpersonal functions, it is necessary to correctly express their identity, status, attitude, and judgment and evaluation of things in publicity-oriented reports, thereby affecting the audiences’ attitudes and behaviors, and building and maintaining good international relations. However, as an important window for international communication, the People’s Daily Online has hardly reproduced the manuscripts of international media in the “Belt and Road” publicity-oriented reports, which may lead to the embarrassing situation of “talking about yourself”. The abundant source of the manuscripts and the unique news perspective and news stand represent the people’s understanding of the “Belt and Road” in different cultures and countries. We should be vigilant. The lack of international manuscript sources easily creates a “China-centric”, which will have a counterproductive effect on international communication. And this kind of hindrance caused by the domestic media also requires us to form a combination of Chinese discourse and discourse functions to properly cope with the relationship between China and other countries in the guidance of the “Belt and Road”.

The construction of Chinese discourse and the interpersonal function of discourse should place emphasis on the mutual development for the participating countries. Although the “Belt and Road” initiative is advocated by China, we cannot hold a high-profile posture, due to its guideline of countries cooperation along the route “Belt and Road” construction. Correspondingly, the Chinese discourse expression and communication reported in the “Belt and Road” publicity-oriented reports is not China’s subjective talk, but an open result of the in-depth exchange of Chinese discourse with the voices of other countries. Chinese discourse should reflect Chinese characteristics, style, and posture with the attention to seeking commonality and compatibility with discourses of other countries. Therefore, we should be aware and cautious of the wording, no arrogance or “China’s dominance”, but involve participating countries to jointly discuss related matters, and “joint consultation” and “joint construction” be available. For example, almost half of the contents of the overseas edition of People’s Daily are original works, and the other half of the reports come from reprinted content. It can be seen that although its report on the “Belt and Road” initiative is not based on originality and highlights the advantages of major international media, it avoids the bias of the source of the article and focuses on the diversification of text sources and ideas, which will help to achieve the development of the media overall structure in the context of the “Belt and Road” initiative, and promote foreign audiences’ attention, understanding and acceptance of China’s “Belt and Road” initiative, and strengthening its global significance as a Chinese solution.

3) In addition, to achieve the combination of Chinese discourse and discourse functions, on one hand, we should respect China’s consistent diplomatic discourse and cultural traditions; on the other

hand, we should adapt to new changes in the international situation and new demands for international information. “Win-win” goal is a guidance for the publicity framework, while it is difficult to agree with Chinese value of “selfless dedication” and believe that as long as it is “selfless” in the world, there must be followed a great scheme. In addition, we should pay attention to the translation of words when promoting the “Belt and Road”. Due to cultural differences, as for some vocabulary and sentences translators should be cautious enough to minimize ambiguity. Therefore, for the sake of publicity, not only should we pay attention to domestic understanding, but also consider cultural differences after translation, select words carefully, and minimize ambiguity and unnecessary misunderstanding. Finally, minimize the need to require other countries’ standing teams or other government officials to make statements through major media reports, and provide a more flexible atmosphere for cooperation.

3.2 Practical Application of Lexical Grammar Theory in Chinese Media Discourse

Lexical research is a foundation of discourse research. The study of lexical grammar has broadened the scope of Chinese discourse studies in publicity reports, making language research more accurate and scientific. Taking China Daily as an example, through the study of vocabulary density distribution and high-frequency vocabulary use, we can analyze deeply the emotional attitudes and ideologies in the texts of news reports.

Lexical density is an important indicator used to measure the amount of information in a text. The class / type symbol ratio is one of the common measurement methods, which can help explain the vocabulary difficulty of a text. The type / type symbol ratio of the “Belt and Road” publicity-oriented reports in “China Daily” is 20.23%, and the sum of the percentages of the first two levels of words is 72.86%, which means that the vocabulary density and information in the report are moderate. Most of the vocabulary comes from the general vocabulary, which explains that the text is relatively easy, and the reader will not feel particularly difficult to grasp it when reading. “China Daily” is a news newspaper facing the international community. Its main purpose is to convey views and attitudes to the public. Therefore, most of the vocabulary choices use common vocabulary so that readers can understand the main content and viewpoints described in the reports.

Text is composed of vocabulary, and the semantic representation of text is largely reflected in the use of vocabulary. China Daily’s reports on the “Belt and Road” mostly involve trade exchanges, cooperation and development, internationalization, bilateral relations, foreign affairs visits by President Xi Jinping and other regions in Asia. Based on “corpus”, the high-frequency words in China Daily’s publicity reports mainly include China (207), said (109), road (79), cooperation (58), Xi (52) development (51), trade (50), Asia (32), visit (27), bilateral (23), economic (21). It is not difficult to see from the above high-frequency word meaning tendency distribution that China Daily’s report on the “Belt and Road” focuses on China-related content, especially Chinese Foreign Minister Xi Jinping’s visits and speeches. The “Belt and Road” initiative was first initiated by China. The international community does not know much about it. China needs to publicize the concept and development model of the “Belt and Road” in order to solve its confusion. The semantic orientation of China and development combined with the development concept of the “Belt and Road” initiative, such as trade, cooperation, Asia, and country, emphasizes the communication between participating countries, with Asia as the center of radiation, and strengthening the trade cooperation of various countries to jointly build the regional economic line of cooperation, win-win and reciprocity has benefited all participating countries and formed a development situation of mutual benefit. The high-frequency verb said confirms the characteristics of news reports, that is, quoting the words of relevant people to enhance the reliability and real-time of the news. At the same time, when China Daily reported on the “Belt and Road”, it highlighted key information, including China’s important status, relevant information of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, and the proposition and nature of the “Belt and Road” strategy, that is, “cooperation”, “economic development” and “national level”, etc. China’s rapid development in recent years and the improvement of its overall national strength have made China’s position in the international community more stable, China’s exchanges and communications with other countries have become

more frequent, and it has played an active role in promoting the development of the world economy. The “Belt and Road”, as an important platform for promoting regional cooperation and development, is an embodiment of economic globalization. Participating countries promote infrastructure construction and economic development through trade communication and project cooperation, forming a situation of mutual benefit.

4. Conclusion

The “Belt and Road” is of great significance to China’s development, so how to publicize it is worth our serious consideration. The media’s correct report on the “Belt and Road” will help more people understand, care about and participate in, and integrate into the “Belt and Road” construction, and eliminate doubts and misunderstandings of the “Belt and Road” initiative by international public opinions, which will help to communicate information, promote the economy, integrate resources, cultural exchanges, shape image, and build consensus. Thereby, this requires that the media not only should abide by the principles of news reporting, based on objective facts, but also have their own characteristics and describe the same incident from different perspectives, while reporting on the “Belt and Road” strategy advocated by China. Meanwhile, we should innovate communication methods and provide multi-form “Belt and Road” reports. Only in this way can China’s wisdom, Chinese solutions and Chinese model go global, spread Chinese voices to the world, and promote the development of the “Belt and Road” initiative. In the subsequent publicity process, by constructing Chinese discourse, combining discourse functions and lexical grammar, Chinese media can contribute to a unique “Chinese” discourse in the process of promoting China’s national image and promoting global participation.

Acknowledgement

University Philosophy and Social Science Research of Jiangsu Province 2019 (The Critical Discourse Analysis and Research on “Belt and Road” Initiative Publicity-oriented Reports), Project No.: 2019SJA0978.

References

- [1] Zhan Shaoxia. (2018). A study on the discourse style and identity of the “Belt and Road” international publicity translation-Taking the overseas edition of People’s Daily as an Example. *News Front*, no. 11.
- [2] Jiao Jin. (2016). A discourse study on the “Belt and Road” reported by CCTV News. Henan University.
- [3] Ma Dongli, Shang Xuenan. (2017). A comparative study of vocabulary in the “Belt and Road” news discourse based on corpus. *Journal of Henan Institute of Education*, no. 11.