

Study on Inclusive Language in Chinese and Thai News Report from the Perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

News report, an important way of disseminating information, is always readily accepted without any prejudice. However, the ideology embedded in it is often ignored by readers. In response to the call for people's ideology among inclusive language, this research draws on the perspective of critical discourse analysis to investigate what the similarities and differences of inclusive language used in Chinese and Thai news report and the reasons behind the discrepancy. Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, this research collects 4 separate news reports from People's Daily and Siam Daily to examine the hidden ideology in inclusive language. The analysis reveals that both media are aware of the importance of inclusive language and use it to reduce ambiguity and stigma in reports. These findings have significant implications for institutions such as public spaces or the media should standardize the use of inclusive language, where necessary.

Keywords

Inclusive language, critical discourse analysis, news report, Fairclough's three-dimensional framework.

1. Introduction

The role of news report in the mapping of ideology has attracted much attention in public, since news report, the most influential medium of information dissemination, often covertly present social ideology to the audience in the image of language (Jiang Yi, 2021). A previous study yielded evidence of a correlation between news report and social ideology (Zhang Ruihua et Shi Xinyuan, 2023). These studies identified that news report is tightly connected with ideology, different news report embedded different ideologies. Ideology is the "the dominant political, educational, or cultural values system that secures its legitimacy through institutionally circulated discourses, and through the impact of these discourses on readers/viewers/listeners" (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015, p. 3).

Inclusive language is language that is changed for the positioning and visibility of minorities. For example, gender inclusive language refers to "the use of linguistic expressions that respect all genders equally. The use of gender inclusive language means that language and written expressions do not discriminate against one sex, gender or gender identity, nor do they perpetuate gender stereotypes." (United Nations guidelines for gender inclusive language communication, 2020). This guideline stands that inclusive language is related with people's recognition of things, especially things in "disadvantaged position". In other words, inclusive language to some extent is associated with ideology. The inclusive language examined in recent studies relate to the paper writing (including those scholarly writing and scientific writing) and teaching using inclusive language are examined (Melissa D Avery, Linda Hunter, Ira Kantrowitz Gordon, 2024; Benko Rina & Martinović Anna, 2021). These studies have presented the great influence of inclusive language in public writing and teaching practice, which are mainly characterized by a bias towards the education. These studies also have identified an imbalance

of ideological representations in the inclusive language. For this reason, they call for researchers to redress these imbalanced situation by investigating the meaning and influence of inclusive language in public where represents ideology. Research should be conducted to explore inclusive language used in the news report from different countries, as the news report plays an important role in expressing the will and image of the country.

Over the past five years, the Chinese government has imposed a number of policies to safeguard women' rights and interests and to protect the rights and interests of vulnerable groups, including the newly amended Law on the Protection of Women Rights and Interests in 2022. There policies call for attention to be paid to vulnerable groups in society and the protection of their rights and interests as well as their physical and mental health. Due to the limited support for the meaning and influence of inclusive language in news report, few people are supposed to know inclusive language's power on vulnerable groups. This makes a compelling case for the need to explore the meaning of inclusive language used in news report and people's ideology behind these reports from different countries. Drawing on the perspective of critical discourse analysis, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

What are the similarities and differences in the use of inclusive language in the Chinese and Thai media towards disadvantaged groups?

What are the reasons for the differences in the use of inclusive language in the Chinese and Thai media?

2. Literature Review

In this literature review, it shall elaborate on why research should be conducted to explore inclusive language used in news report. It shall then present the theoretical framework that was used to guide this inquiry.

2.1. Critical discourse analysis by Fairclough's three-dimensional model

Studies have examined that news report, as an important channel for conveying information, are in fact an imaginary world constructed from different ideologies and discourses of power, and that the foreign media's reports on China also imply certain political stances and ideologies (Li Qingming & Wu Hua, 2019; Shang Xuenan, 2017). These studies have revealed different countries with ideological representations are supposed to present different news report. Their findings strengthen the need to investigate inclusive language with ideological representations in news report when the news audiences are vulnerable groups.

Research has identified that only a small proportion of critical discourse analysis in China are conducted using a three-dimensional framework. For instance, in the past five years, only Shi Jinyang (2020) collected and processed the comments on the topic of "Square Dancing Aunties Fighting for Land" hosted by the official micro blog of China Daily, combining with Python programming language and other means, and analyzed the presentation of information, stylistic characteristics, and the media power game among subjects, groups and organizations of online gossip. Jiang Meng (2023) Adopting Fairclough's three-dimensional model and presupposition theory to comparatively analyse discourse presuppositions in CNN news reports. In addition, there are few researches conduct inclusive language by combining critical discourse analysis.

In contrast to the limited literature on critical discourse analysis conducted using a three-dimensional framework in China, foreign studies have mostly used the following four types of data for analysis: (1) speeches of public figures (2) news report (3) social media content represented by Facebook and Twitter and (4) advertisements. Although foreign studies cover many aspects, still few studies are conducted to investigate inclusive language in news report.

For example, Nguyen, H (2016) combines the three-dimensional framework with theories such as advertising landscape and visual design grammar.

In summary, research has focused on ideologies behind news report and the influence of inclusive language on education but limited attention has been paid to inclusive language in news report and its reason of countries’ differences. This investigation extends the study point of critical discourse analysis in news report and need to consider the country’s power in words chosen in news report.

2.2. Theoretical background: three-dimensional framework

To address the above-mentioned gaps, the study draws on Fairclough’s three-dimensional model to analyze the inclusive language used in news report.

Fairclough believes that language is a part of society, a form of social practice, and that any social practice can be constrained and influenced by the whole social environment. Accordingly, he proposes three dimensions of discourse and describes discourse as a complete unity containing text, discourse practice and social practice.

In this model, text is the linguistic analysis of content; discursive practice refers to the process of text generation (production), dissemination (distribution), and reception (consumption), which focuses on the creation of discourse and genre and on the interaction between authors and readers; and social practice stresses the dialectic of discursive power relations, discursive practice, and social practice. Social practice emphasizes discursive power relations and the dialectic between discursive and social practices. These three parts are closely related, each of them is indispensable to discourse analysis, and each of them has a specific purpose. The three-dimensional nature of discourse requires that critical discourse analysis must also be three-dimensional, after which he put forward the three steps of critical discourse analysis in his book *Critical Discourse Analysis: A Study of the Language of Criticism*, published in 1995, namely, description, interpretation and explanation.

In this study, it analyzes inclusive language used in different news report within three parts (description, interpretation and explanation), see Fig. 1.

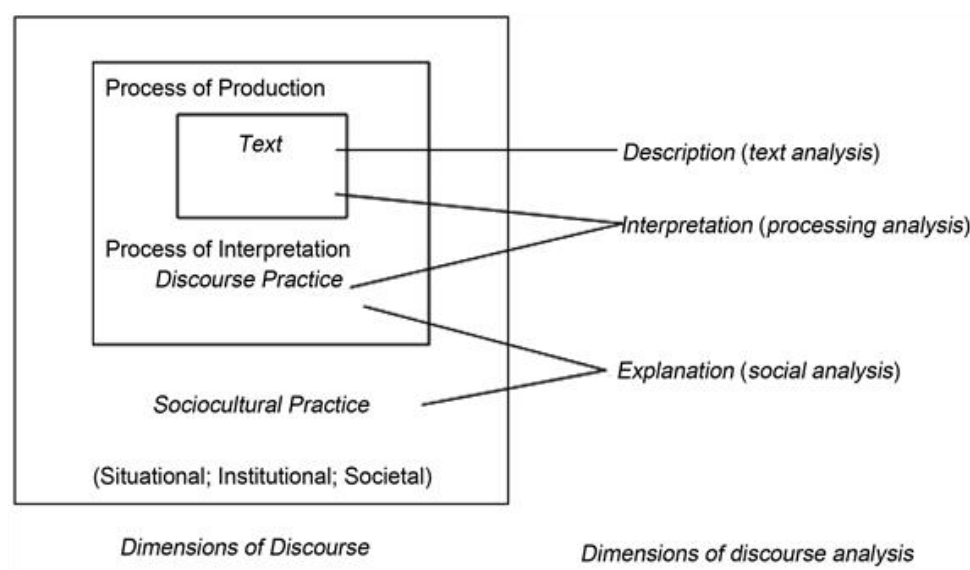


Figure 1: Fairclough’s three dimensional framework

References are cited from (Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) of Social Media—Taking a Political Interview about China’s Issues on YouTube as a Case Study, 2018)

3. Methodology

Since the present study draws on critical discourse analysis perspective to explore inclusive language used for vulnerable groups in news report, it chooses three dimensional framework to help analyze news report dictation. By focusing on text, we can gain a better understanding on linguistic feature of news report (including vocabulary, grammar, coherence and discourse structure). By focusing on sociocultural practice, it explains inclusive language from the perspective of ideology and power theory. Firstly, the study researches news report about vulnerable groups in both Chinese and Thai newspaper. Then, it selects inclusive language used in all these news reports. By combing three dimensional model, we analyze these inclusive language one by one.

3.1. Data Resource

In order to insure the authority of news report, the main corpus of this study is to research relative reports in People’s Daily (Chinese official newspaper) and Siam Daily (Thai newspaper). This study finds 4 news report about vulnerable groups from People’s Daily and Siam Daily (each of them has 2 reports).

3.2. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted by researching key words “vulnerable groups” or “disabled” in People’s Daily and Siam Daily. After defining the 4 news reports, the author reads them one by one and marks the inclusive words. Then the author finds the words which are replaced by inclusive words. The relative words are in the following Table 1.

Table 1: Inclusive words		
The newspaper	Inclusive words	Words are replaced
People’s Daily	hearing impaired	long zi
	visually impaired	xia zi
	hearing loss	er long
	mentally handicapped	sha zi
	“xin qing nian”	
Siam Daily	homeless	rogue
	visually impaired	xia zi
	hearing impaired	long zi
	physical disability friends	deformity

4. Conclusion

To answer the research questions, the author divided the findings into three parts, corresponding to textual practice, discursive practice, and social practice in Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework. The collected inclusive language is analyzed in relation to socio-cultural factors as well as the international contextual environment to reveal the similarities and differences in the use of inclusive language by the Chinese and Thai media towards disadvantaged groups and the reasons behind it.

4.1. Analysis of Textual Practice

The practical analysis of the text focuses on the linguistic description of the text. In the following textual analysis, the linguistic description of the text is mainly from the classification system.

Classification system is an important means to reflect the conceptual function of language, and it is also the most basic way of human cognition. In the process of recognizing the external world, people classify and integrate it and give order to the external world. Lexical choice is the best tool for realizing the classification system, and different lexical choices can reflect different attitudes and value tendencies. Van Dijk argues that lexical choice is an obvious aspect of news discourse, and that “implicit ideologies can be inferred from the lexical descriptions and identifications of these social groups and their members”.

Example 1 Young Ireland’s social workers have heard from elderly parents about cases in which ‘xin qing nian’ (young people with mental disabilities) have ‘disappeared’ or have been sent to live in isolation in a nursing home when the core carer has passed away. --People’s Daily

Example 2 “Our aim is to make sure that no homeless person shows up in the city and that we have the means to meet their daily needs and access public services according to their rights.” --Siam Daily

As can be seen from the above examples, People’s Daily and Siam Daily coincided in their choice of vocabulary to describe “vulnerable groups” or “people with disability” by choosing inclusive language that is more caring and respectful. The choice of more positive words in the reporting process shows that the media is giving due respect and help to the disadvantaged and disabled groups. The use of terms such as “xin qing nian” and “homeless”, as opposed to ‘stupid’ and ‘rogue’, not only clearly conveyed the content of the story, but also contained the message that the story was about a person with a disability. The use of words such as “xin qing nian” and “homeless” not only clearly conveys the content of the news, but also implies a sense of tolerance and care for people with disabilities, thus influencing readers’ understanding of and respect for people with disability.

4.2. Analysis of Discursive Practice

Unlike textual practice, discursive practice are concerned with explicating the relationship between texts and discursive practice, i.e. how texts are produced, transmitted and received. The following analyses how inclusive language is represented in the Chinese and Thai media, mainly through the two aspects of information sources and forms of transcription.

4.2.1. Sources of Information

Sources of information relate to the sources of discourse. In the process of reporting, as journalists cannot witness the whole process and the whole event being carried out and evaluated, they need to consult relevant people or organizations to increase the reliability and persuasiveness of the report. News sources are generally classified into three categories: specific sources, semi-specific sources and unknown sources. A specific source is one that details the name, occupation, identity, etc. of the information provider; a semi-specific source does not involve precise information about the information provider, but only presents part of the broad information; and an unidentified source is one that omits the source altogether.

Example 3 Accompanying Xizai were social worker Li, teacher Duan and teacher Fish from Guangzhou Yang Ai Resource Centre, a partner of the One Foundation’s Ocean Paradise Project, in a grief counselling session to help Xizai learn about death in a positive way. Such a life education programme for mentally challenged adult partners and parents is still a gap in China. --China Daily

Example 4 Bangkok Deputy Mayor Sarnon said that the new Bangkok government is aware of the problem, so the Bangkok government has drafted a policy to improve the quality of life of Bangkok’s homeless people in collaboration with stakeholders. --Siam Daily

News discourse, in order to demonstrate its objectivity and impartiality and try to avoid subjective evaluations, usually has four types of informants, including the government, relevant enterprises, ordinary people and elites represented by academics. Both Chinese and Thai

media's sources of information for reporting on people with disabilities contain semi-specific sources with a trusted provider discourse. This allows readers to understand the real life and feelings of the disadvantaged groups, and also shows the concern and practical help of the state and the media for the disadvantaged groups.

4.2.2. Paraphrasing Forms

Paraphrase form is mainly concerned with the way in which the discourse of others is quoted. According to Fairclough's research, it can be divided into two types: direct discourse and indirect discourse. The former is a way of quoting that is completely faithful to the original discourse, usually with inverted commas, quoting the exact words spoken by another person and keeping the content and tense unchanged; the latter is the addition of linguistic forms on the basis of preserving the content, and its presentation and wording are determined by the reporter.

Example 5 "This hearing aid speaks very clearly and there is no more noise in my ears. The Party and the government are really very concerned about us, helping us to get fitted with hearing aids without charging us a penny, which is really appreciated," said Ms Wu, a member of the public. --China Daily

Example 6 Bangkok Deputy Mayor Sarnon said that the new Bangkok government is aware of the problem, so the Bangkok government has drafted a policy to improve the quality of life of Bangkok's homeless people in cooperation with stakeholders. --Siam Daily

Direct quotes in the China Daily are more conversational and compelling. It allows readers to intuitively feel the deep gratitude of the hearing-impaired people for the help given by the state from the perspective of the masses, which side by side reflects China's strong national strength and its belief in serving the people wholeheartedly. Siam Daily's indirect quotations make the narration more fluent and authoritative, and the use of words such as "government awareness" and "drafting policy" is free of subjective emotion, which makes the report real and credible.

4.3. Analysis of Social Practice

In addition to textual and discursive practices, the interpretation of social practices is essential. Fairclough repeatedly emphasizes his view of language as a social practice and that the two are closely linked. More specifically, this phase emphasizes the exploration of the wider socio-cultural context in which language is situated, including the political, economic and cultural contexts of discourse, among others.

Analyzed at the political level, the United Nations introduced the UN Gender Inclusive Guidelines in 2020, which call on people to use inclusive language in public, in everyday life, and to treat everyone equally, without discrimination or stigmatization. The promotion of such guidelines has made China and Thailand more equal, fair and careful in media language, not only from the good quality and strength of the country itself, but also from the external moral guidelines, so the inclusive language in the media reports appear in a high rate.

In terms of economic and cultural background, China and Thailand are both Asian countries with little cultural difference. The level of economic development of the two countries is not weak, especially China is in the status of a major economic power. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the widespread use of inclusive language in Chinese and Thai media.

5. Discussion

The summary table on inclusive language in media coverage has answered the first research question: what are the similarities and differences in the use of inclusive language in the Chinese and Thai media towards vulnerable groups. The similarities are that both the Thai and Chinese media choose to use inclusive language instead of disrespectful, discriminatory words when describing groups of people with disabilities. This also shows that the ideologies of both

countries are in agreement in terms of inclusive language, and that the Chinese and Thai people are able to respect and care for every person and every group equally.

The difference is that the Chinese media's inclusive language is more diverse, with clever use of phrases such as acronyms (which have a more positive connotation) to describe people with disabilities, which is evident in the examples of media coverage. In contrast, the Thai media's inclusive language is slightly less varied, with a single word being used as a substitute for a person with a disability. This difference may be based on the different language systems of Chinese and Thai, where Chinese is very rich in near-synonyms and several Chinese phrases can be found to describe the same object or behaviour; it may also be due to the fact that Chinese is an ideograph and Thai is an epigraph. Ideographs express more concepts of things rather than mere pronunciation, and ideographs have a stronger ability to "recreate" and "localize" than do phonographs, so, for the same concept, Chinese has more creative and localized results than Thai. Therefore, for the same expression of a concept, Chinese has more creative and localized results than Thai.

However, since the Thai news reports selected for this study were mainly from a Thai Chinese-language media, and the contents were translated from Thai, it is not entirely certain whether the original Thai report describes disabled people as a word or not. Subsequent research could begin in this area by finding more original versions of national media reports in both languages for comparison.

6. Conclusion

This study explores inclusive language in Chinese and Thai media from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, and adopts Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis model to collect and study inclusive language reports on people with disabilities in the People's Daily and Siam Daily, and the study finds that both Chinese and Thai media tend to use inclusive language to increase the fairness and respect of the reportage, and that in terms of the variety and use of vocabulary, the Chinese media will be more diverse than the Thai media. The study found that both Chinese and Thai media tend to use inclusive language to increase fairness and respect in their reporting, while Chinese media are more diverse than Thai media in terms of vocabulary variety and usage, probably due to the different language systems of Chinese and Thai. The study suggests that inclusive language is important for public-facing authorities and organizations, and that the media in particular should pay more attention to it in their reporting.

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