

An Exploration of the Discursive Representation of Chinese Dream in a Chinese English-Language Press

Yansheng Liu^{a, *}, Yating Chen^b

Guangxi University of Science and Technology, Liuzhou City, Guangxi, China

^{a, *}yansheng.liu@gxust.edu.cn, ^bchenyating009@gmail.com

Abstract. The aim of this discursive representation of the Chinese Dream is to analyze the presentation of the Chinese English-Language press based on the corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis. The study sought to establish (a) key terms used to discuss the Chinese Dream in the Chinese English-language press (b) the collocation of key terms in the Chinese Dream discourse in the English-language press in China and (c) the frequently used words in the discussion of the Chinese Dream discourse in the English-Language press in China. The findings of this paper give credence to the assertion that powerful officials use media coverage to manipulate other members of the society by providing the information that will work in their favor. Mostly, the Chinese dream has been sold as a dream for all the Chinese people and the President, the Chinese Communist Party, and the party's general secretary are some of the entities that have been used to give weight to the preposition.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics; Critical discourse analysis; AntConc.

1. Introduction

The Chinese Dream is a concept that has been promoted in the context of the Chinese society by Xi Jinping ever since 2013. The concept Chinese Dream is mainly associated with a set of personal as well as national beliefs and ideals in China (Xiaosi and Chiying, 2013) [1]. According to Sulafa (2018), the concept Chinese Dream is typically used by government officials and media houses among others to depict the roles of persons in the Chinese society in addition to the objectives and targets of the entire China as a nation. It mainly focuses on the success of the Chinese citizens, the shared effort, collectivism/socialism as well as the glory of the Chinese nation. The Chinese ultimate leader, Xi Jinping, who is currently the head of the Communist Party of China, has been quoted severally stating that young persons should dare to dream, work industriously so as to realize those dreams, as well as contribute to revitalizing the country. In particular, president Xi Jinping proposed the concept Chinese Dream when he visited the National Museum of China at the end of November 2012 and has since then used this concept in various speeches (Xiaosi and Chiying, 2013).

However, the concept Chinese Dream is interpreted differently in the media, especially in Chinese English-Language Press. For instance, on one hand, it is considered as a dream of sustainable development. The Chinese society has been associated with a fast economic growth in the last few decades. However, such growth has been accompanied by soil, air and water pollution, which threaten the lives of plants, animals and the wellbeing of citizens (Lu, 2015)[2]. For instance, the increased levels of manufacturing activities in major cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, have resulted in augmented levels of air pollution; therefore, the type of air that is inhaled by residents of such towns comprises of chemicals and contents that are risky to their health (Ma, Cleary and Ma, 2017)[3]. Furthermore, the overexploitation of natural resources by manufacturers, that is, the use of resources without replacing them at the same rate of use, also threatens the depletion of these resources thus affecting the wellbeing of the future generation (Liu and Xie, 2013)[4]. In this regard, it has been argued that the Chinese Dream mainly involves the vision of adopting sustainable practices in the manufacturing and other areas to improve the sustainability of the Chinese economy.

On the other hand, it is considered as the dream of achieving the cultural influence at the global level. The US has had a major influence on the world as far as its culture is concerned. According to Allen (2016)[5], the US has been a major exporter of the cultural practices across the world. In the Chinese context, young persons have been envious of the US culture for a long time, and as such,

young persons in China are majorly attracted to listen to the US songs as well as yearning to speak English similar to Americans (Anastasiia, 2019)[6]. In this respect, it is argued that the Chinese Dream is majorly focused on being a major exporter of culture to other countries in the world. Presently, the Chinese government is making efforts in an attempt to help China to achieve a global influence in terms of its culture, such as encouraging heavy investment in the most popular sport in the world (football) with a major view of becoming a nation of interest among football fans across the world, which can easily influence people in the world to be attracted to the Chinese culture (this is referred to as yielding soft power) (Connell, 2018)[7].

Overall, however, it is observed that the Chinese Dream is interpreted in the productions that are common in the Chinese media. In this respect, this study aims at exploring the ideological representation of the “Chinese dream” in the media discourses following the speech by the General Secretary of the People’s Party of China. This study is based on the corpus-driven approach as well as the Critical Discourse Analysis approach; based on these approaches, the study identifies the features and values associated with the “Chinese Dream” as well as the ideological and political representation of this dream in the media discourse.

1.1 Research Aim and Questions

This study will aim at investigating the discursive representation of the Chinese Dream in a Chinese English-Language press based on the corpus linguistics and Critical discourse analysis. This study is fulfilled by addressing the following research questions.

What are the key terms used to discuss the Chinese Dream in the Chinese English-language press?

What is the collocation of these key terms in the Chinese English-language press’s corpus?

What are the frequently used words in the discussion of the Chinese Dream in the English-language press in China?

1.2 Research Rationale

Since the concept Chinese Dream was put forward by Xi Jinping at the end of November 2012 in an event that was dubbed The Road towards Renewal, this concept has become common in the Chinese media. According to Berkofsky (2016)[8], the concept Chinese Dream has become a hot item in the Chinese media. However, different media in the Chinese context tend to have a different interpretation of the concept Chinese dream. For instance, this concept is frequent in the Chinese English press but is described differently as argued by Tze (2018)[9]. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate how this concept is represented in different Chinese English newspapers. Furthermore, a large number of people across the world, among them the Chinese individuals, are not aware or do not understand this concept- the Chinese Dream (Wang, 2014)[10]. As such, it becomes critical to evaluate how the concept Chinese Dream is represented in the Chinese media discourse in an attempt to inform the public what the Chinese dream is all about. On the other hand, according to the critical discourse analysis framework, discourse is considered as a social practice (Fairclough, 2010)[11]; therefore, it becomes critical to evaluate the association between society and discourse.

2. Literature review

2.1 Discourse and ideology

Although the focus of this study is media discourse, it is important to evaluate the general meaning of discourse, and how it relates to ideology. According to Fuller (2018)[12], the term discourse refers to how meaning is generally created in a given society and communicated to members of the said society through vocal, sign and written forms. Richardson (2007) argues that the main role of a discourse is creating an environment or context. Serafis and Herman (2018)[13] are of the view that a discourse is intended to convey a specific belief, feeling and thought and that it urges individuals to adapt a specific line of thinking. According to Fairclough (2010), the mental processing of media discourse by the audience is to a large extent informed by how the news are structured as well as what

is emphasized in a particular story. Therefore, media discourse is shaped socially and offers the framework or structure upon which a public debate can be carried out.

According to Fadeicheva (2007)[14], an ideology is a reflection of the primary fundamentals of social identity (a proportion of a person's self-concept based on their membership in a particular group of people) and that this ideology defines the interests of a given group based on a structured set of attitudes where the meanings of these attitudes are conveyed via the news discourse. Based on the argument by Tat'yan (2018)[15], the news discourse tends to frame either illegitimate or legitimate thoughts/beliefs/ideas and views by selecting and disseminating information to the mass audience. It is based on this line of argument that Naser, Negar and Rezaei (2015) [16] accentuate that a discourse has the ability to endorse power by influencing people ideologically. Lanchukorn and Pattamawan (2017)[17] opine that the media discourse provides a bigger picture of the social reality as an ideology that is structured as well as promoting the social solidarity through the reinforcement of national identity; the media discourse also supports shared beliefs based on the utilization of language.

2.2 Media discourse and critical discourse analysis

The media discourse refers to the presentation of a discourse that takes place through the broadcasting platforms regardless of whether it is spoken or written and is generally focused on the passive listeners, readers or viewers. According to Li, Pearce and Low (2018)[18], the term media discourse refers to the totality of how reality is represented in both the broadcasting and print media. In this case, the broadcasting media includes television, radio stations, and newspapers. Based on Neng (2018)[19] research, the concept of media discourse can be considered as a non-private, manufactured, official/on-record, type of an interaction.

Some studies on media discourse have focused on the distribution of power between stakeholders in the media. Kalyango (2011) [20] observed that the recipients of the media discourse are usually not in a position to make prompt responses to the producers of the discourse in question. Cukier et al (2009)[21] adopted Hebermas framework to describe the public sphere and demonstrate the use of media in public sphere to inform and transform the opinions of the public. In this description, Cukier et al (2009) observed that there is an unequal distribution of power between the political parties, lobbyists, pressure groups, politicians and mass media professionals on one hand, and the general public on the other hand. The political parties, lobbyists, pressure groups, politicians, and mass media professionals have unfettered access to the media. Cukier et al (2009) argued that these entities cannot help but exert their power on the general public because they can select the relevant content to their power interests and use the media to influence the formation of opinions. On the other hand, the general public has largely no access to the media and are usually restricted to consumption of the information distributed by through the media.

2.3 Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis

Kwary (2017) defined a corpus as a selection containing a large number of words that are chosen to represent a language variety. Fuster and Clavel (2010) adopted definition noted that corpus is a collection of language texts that are naturally occurring and are chosen to represent a variety of a language. In this case, the corpus chosen represents the natural use of language variety to present the prevailing discourse on the Chinese Dream. According to Kwary (2017), the objective of a corpus is to enable researchers, learners, and teachers to gain a deeper understanding into language in use.

Some corpus analysis studies have focused on establishing the lexical analysis of the selected corpora. Wang (2015) undertook a lexical analysis of two sets of corpora collected from China Daily and the New York Times. The study adopted concordance analysis using three keywords (China, growth, and confidence) and lexical classification. In relation to concordance analysis, the study categorized the words that appeared with the word China into adjectives indicating China's role in tackling the difficulties of the economic crisis, the collocations that demonstrated the measures that China had undertaken to help with recovery efforts, and the collocations where China was used as a

noun modifier. In regard to lexical classification, a manual approach was adopted with 8 sample texts from each corpus used to conduct qualitative analysis and establish differences in the use of words. The researcher categorized words into commendatory (positive), neutral and derogatory (negative). The researcher concluded that there were significant differences in the coverage of the causes and impacts of the crisis between the China Daily and the New York Times.

Gries (2009) argued that corpus linguistics is not just interested in understanding the number of times that a linguistics phenomenon occurs in a given corpora, but must also consider the following:

Whether an element occurs within a corpus or its co-occurrence with another element in the corpus is zero or larger.

Whether something does occur in the corpora more regularly than something else.

Whether something is observed less or more often than one would normally expect it to occur by chance.

Gries (2009) also argued that these elements have increased the importance of statistical methods in corpus linguistic though this an area where the author argued that the field of corpus linguistics still needs to develop further. Chen (2014) also appreciated the important role that recent innovations, specifically the Internet and software developments, have had on corpus linguistic. According to Chen (2014), the Internet has made it easier for researchers to collect corpus while developments in software has made it easy for researchers to evaluate the data.

There have been many more uses of corpus-based linguistic approaches in critical discourse analysis as demonstrated by Cheng (2013). The author showed how numerous earlier studies have adopted CDA to analyze texts including interview transcripts, position papers, speeches, political discussions, and press articles focusing on the use of keywords, semantic associations, intonation, collocations, word frequency, adverbs, modal auxiliaries, nouns, and verbs to present their respective discourses. In essence, Cheng (2013) captured the numerous ways that researchers were using corpus linguistic to conduct discourse analysis. This study along with the studies discussed earlier shows that corpus linguistics can be an important tool for a researcher conducting critical discourse analysis of any subject including the presentation of the Chinese Dream in the English-language press.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach

Choosing the research approach is an important step when designing the research methodology that will be adopted to research any given research phenomenon. Grover (2015) noted that the research approach captures the philosophical world view adopted by the researcher when conducting the research, the research design, and the research methodologies. A researcher can choose from positivism, transformative, constructivism and pragmatism (Grover, 2015). This study adopted a pragmatist approach as it is flexible and allows a researcher to adopt different research methods for different research problems.

In relation to the research design, the researcher adopted an exploratory research design. Exploratory research design allows a researcher to undertake a cross-sectional analysis of the phenomenon without interfering with the research phenomenon. Balan and Ionita (2011) exploratory research design allows to proactively learn new skills, knowledge, and behaviors by fundamentally interacting with the environment where the phenomenon is observed. In this case, the researcher acquired knowledge about the Chinese dream by proactively analyzing the presentation of the concept in the Chinese English-language press.

3.2 Data analysis

Three main quantitative methods were used in the analysis of the corpora developed through the data collection methods identified above. First, the corpora was fed into the two applications in preparation for the analysis of the data. On entering the corpora into the AntConc, a list of words used

and their frequency was generated. For instance, it was noted that there was a total of 30,466 words and 4640 word types.

Table 1. Most used words in the corpus

1. The	2,074	2. Of	1,036
3. And	980	4. To	794
5. A	680	6. In	652
7. X	532	8. S	461
9. China	426	10. Is	394
11. Chinese	358	12. For	273
13. That	245	14. With	236
15. Dream	206	16. Xi	193
17. As	192	18. Said	191
19. People	185	20. Has	183
21. Xa	179	22. On	177
23. By	161	24. Country	146
25. It	145	26. One	135
27. He	128	28. At	124
29. An	119	30. Are	117
31. Be	116	32. Have	113
33. Two	109	34. World	106
35. Was	104	36. His	102
37. From	95	38. Will	93
39. Development	86	40. Its	86
41. More	83	42. Not	83
43. This	83	44. 81	1
45. Been	80	46. New	76
47. Systems	75	48. National	74
49. But	73	50. President	73
51. Party	70	52. Their	70
53. All	67	54. About	64
55. Hong	63	56. Kong	62
57. Who	61	58. Political	60
59. Also	59	60. Which	59
61. We	58	62. Beijing	55
63. Can	54	64. Years	52
65. Jinping	52	66. Countries	50
67. She	50		

Table 2. Nouns and adjectives among the most frequent words in the corpus

China	Chinese	Dream	People
He	Development	Systems	Party
Hong	Kong	Xi	Country
World	National	President	Jinping
Countries	Years	Beijing	Political
Their	Country	We	

4. Conclusion

The analysis reported above has answered the various research questions established in the process of undertaking the research. For instance, the study has established that numerous terms have been used to characterize the Chinese dream. These terms emphasize the importance of the dream and its ability to deliver both peaceful development, economic progress and to improve the status of the Chinese society. The terms used such as economic miracle, path of peaceful development and common destiny imply that the Chinese Dream involves economic growth of China.

The keyword analysis shows that there is a specific populace that the Chinese English-language press targets. It was deduced from these keywords that the Chinese dream as presented in the Chinese English-language press is meant for the Chinese people in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao and specifically those that subscribe to the Communist Party.

The findings of this paper give credence to the assertion that powerful officials dominate the press at the expense of other members of the society given that they get preferential treatment by the press. Mostly, the Chinese dream has been sold as a dream for all the Chinese people and the President, the Chinese Communist Party, and the party's general secretary are some of the entities that have been used to give weight to the proposition.

The study has also established the key features of the Chinese dream to be elements such as the need to create a harmonious society by championing world peace. It also envisages China playing a leading role in the new international order.

Another element of the current study is that it does establish the differences that exists between the Chinese dream and the American dream. The current study concurred with the earlier studies that observed that the Chinese dream was a collective dream while the American dream was largely an individualistic dream that focuses on what individuals can achieve, specifically upward movement while the Chinese dream focuses on what the collective Chinese society can achieve. The discrepancy between the two dreams arises from the ideological perspectives adopted in the two sets of dreams. The American dream is based on capitalistic ideology while the Chinese dream is based on a socialist ideology.

It is also evident from the analysis that there are apparent patterns as several terms are used alongside the phrase Chinese dream to deliver the message to the targeted population. The study identified other terms that are also employed in the discourse such as Xi Jinping (the main proponent of the dream), and Chinese. As observed in the findings section, the use of the adjectives national and Chinese alongside the Chinese dream is meant to show that the dream largely belongs to the people of China.

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