

Contrastive Analysis of Lexical Choice and Ideologies in News Reporting the Same Accidents between Chinese and American Newspapers

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Abstract—This article probes into the lexical choice of six pieces of news reporting three safety accidents in China in *China Daily* and *The Washing Post*. By analyzing the difference of the word choice and verbal messages, the article aims to reveal the hidden ideologies in the news discourse covertly implied and unbeknownst to the readers. Guided by assumptions of critical discourse analysis and drawing on the framework of lexical classification in Halliday's (1994) systemic-functional grammar, the study finds that the seemingly impersonal, objective news reports are not neutral at all; rather, they encode ideologies to exert influence on readers' view towards the world. The article demonstrates how the two newspapers represented the same event in vastly different ways through the particular uses of lexicon that reflected their differing ideological standpoints and national interests.

Index Terms—critical discourse analysis, accident news, lexical choice, lexical classification, ideology

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) especially in the past decades has rendered mass media unprecedented power to affect every individual's life and worldview. News has been the most prominent genre in mass media and the most important source of information of human communication. Due to this undeniable power, news language and media discourse have inspired many critical studies in many disciplines, such as media and communication studies, applied linguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, and (critical) discourse analysis. Among these, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an important discipline and a method aiming to disclose the relationship between language and ideology through analysis of text features in discourses and the context in which the text is produced. Through years, CDA scholars such as Bell (1991), Fowler (1991), Fowler et al. (1979), Fairclough (1989), Richardson (2007), Teo (2000) and van Dijk (2001) have found that news is never a value-free vehicle, but an ideological social practice. Though press throughout the world claims factuality, objectivity and neutrality in its news reporting, news actually not only reports the matters but reflects the attitudes of the reporters towards the events. Such attitudes and ideologies they invest inevitably exert impact on people's value orientation, political attitudes and living objectives through the so called neutral reports. News reports are inevitably influenced by culture, ideology, and social stratum, which make news unable to be reported in a completely neutral way. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on news discourse and examine the language in news to see how it embodies ideology to affect people and shape their outlook.

Accident reports are special news that focuses on "an unpleasant event, especially in a vehicle, that happens unexpectedly and causes injury or damage" or "something that happens unexpectedly and is not planned in advance" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2008). Since accidents are unpredicted events which often lead to injury, death, catastrophe, financial and social misfortune, accident news belongs to downside news. Due to its negative and eruptive nature, accident news tends to attract immediate attention from the press. Being different from natural disasters, accidents are usually caused by human factors and closely related to people's life, and such news often attracts more attention. For instance, shortly after the 911 terrorist attacks which happened in the US in 2001, the same news footage was shown everywhere and the reportage dominated the stands of newsagents the world over. However, in reporting this same accident, different newspapers, television, websites, etc. produced different versions of the news due to their preferences of the choice of language features that reflect their own interpretation and ideology of the event. However, through this process, news tends to portray a misshapen picture of reality that may mislead the readers. This article attempts to analyze some news reports of the same accidents in China from the websites of *China Daily* and *The Washington Post*, aiming to reveal the hidden ideologies of the reporters, the newspapers and the Chinese and American governments unbeknownst to the readers.

The websites of *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* were chosen to study accident news because both are leading daily newspapers with widespread impact in their respective countries. *China Daily* has been the only official English language newspaper in China since its first publication in 1981. Often regarded as the “official mouthpiece” of the Chinese Communist Party, it plays a unique role in creating China’s national image and in articulating the Chinese government’s policies with its ideological orientations (Li, 2010). *The Washington Post*, on the other hand, is one of the most circulated and leading daily newspapers in the United States. It is notable for its political reporting on the working of the White House, Congress and the other aspects of the American government, its coverage of international news and the influence on the content it has on the other mass media (Wikipedia, 2014). Therefore, both papers can be considered as representative of the policies and concerns of their respective government. The websites of the two papers offer an ideal source to investigate linguistic features in news discourse to unravel ideological differences between them. Another reason for choosing *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* is that both are in English, so that contrastive analysis can be made on the choice of linguistic features of news of both sides conveniently.

The news reportage chosen to examine in this study are three accidents which happened in recent years in China. They are the 2011 Wenzhou train accident, the 2013 Beijing Tiananmen Square attack and the 2014 Kunming attack. The first refers to China’s first high-speed rail fatal accident when a fast moving bullet train rear-ended a stalled service on a viaduct outside Wenzhou on July 23, 2011, killing 40 people and injuring 191 others. Faulty signaling and the stormy weather and lighting, according result of the investigation conducted by the former Ministry of Railways of China, were the main causes of the accident. Train speeds were slowed from 350 km/h to 300 km/h and most projects were suspended after the accident. The second accident refers to the fatal vehicle crash in Beijing’s Tian’anmen Square on October 28, 2013, when an SUV ploughed through bystanders and burst into flames, killing the three people in the car and two bystanders, and injured another 40. The crash was later identified by the police as a violent terrorist attack carefully planned, organized and premeditated by Uygur separatist groups. Eight suspects were captured in connection with the terrorist attack. The third, 2014 Kunming attack refers to the terror attack at Kunming Railway Station in Yunnan Province on March 1, 2014, after five knife-wielding terrorists killed 31 people and injured 141 others. The police shot four attackers to death and wounded and seized one on the spot. Because of the eruptive nature and the great negative impact brought by them, the three accidents were both reported by the two newspapers. The purpose of this study is to investigate the specific linguistic choices made by each newspaper, and in turn, help us to understand the ideological differences between Chinese and American news reporting the same accidents. The present study hopes to draw attention from the English teachers to notice the importance of cultivating students’ critical thinking awareness and reading ability, which may help them understand English news better and deeper.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. News Discourse

News mainly deals with happenings of the recent past. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2008), news is the “new information about something that has happened recently; reports of recent events that appear in newspapers or on television or radio”. Reah (2007: 4) defines news as “information about recent events that are of interest to a sufficiently large group, or that may affect the lives of a sufficiently large group”. These definitions show that news is not only what happened recently, but what events that can be regarded as important or newsworthy. News is the communication of the selected information. Fowler (1991) believes that news media selects events according to news values, which originates from general values about the society such as “consensus” and “hierarchy”, journalistic conventions, nature of sources, publication frequency and schedule and so on. Therefore, the contents of news are not just facts about the world, but in a very general sense “beliefs”, “values”, “theories”, “propositions” and “ideology” (ibid.). Fowler (1991) thinks that news is not a newsworthy event itself, but a product of selection and transformation of a real event. Since the vast majority of events are not mentioned in news reports, so the selection of events immediately gives readers a partial view of the world. And selection is usually accompanied by transformation, differential treatment in presentation according to numerous political, economic and social factors. So the world of news is not the real world, but a world skewed and judged. The language of news is pervasive and prominent in our society. News, like any other discourse, is inevitably not a value-free reflection of reality (Fowler, 1991). Therefore, it is worthwhile to learn the way of how language works and affects people’s comprehension towards this world, as well as how news is produced and shaped by values.

In different countries different languages will be used in news discourses, and the various languages used will represent particular reality of the world. Newspaper discourse has always announced its objectivity and impartiality towards the world, but with the birth of CDA, critical linguists and scholars have interrogated the assertion. Richardson (2007) has stated that,

Journalistic discourse has some very specific textual characteristics, some very specific method of text production and consumption, and is defined by a particular set of relationships between itself and other agencies of symbolic and material power. These three sets of characteristics – that is, the language of journalism, its production and consumption and the relations of journalism to social ideas and institutions – are clearly inter-related and sometimes difficult to disentangle (p.1).

Though news discourse is announced to report facts objectively and without bias, by selection and transformation, news is not merely the display of reality, and it also carries values as well as orientations. Without a critical ability, it is hard for readers to find the hidden values when they read the words on pages.

According to Gu's (2007) findings, news reports have several features different from other discourses. In news discourse, the headlines are eye-catching, and the semantic units in the lead sentences are richer in meanings than those of the opening paragraphs of other discourses. News reports often employ descending order to describe the progression of the event, and important news is often accompanied by pictures and diagrams. The inverted triangle form used to convey information is more frequent than that of other discourses. Further, news discourse is often positioned between colloquial discourse and academic discourse, and it emphasizes the use of vocabulary belonging to the basic level and category in order to be simple and to facilitate understandings by the public (ibid.). To sum up, newspaper discourse has its unique style and structure. Because of the embedded ideologies, readers are not likely to figure out its implication under the superficial language. Thus, to analyze newspaper discourses from a critical perspective is efficacious to explore the relationship between language and ideology.

B. Ideology and Lexicon in News Discourse

Ideology has been the focus of critical linguists for years, however, because the term encompasses many different meanings and functions, a single, adequate definition of ideology is difficult to find. The following two are useful for the purpose of the present research. Van Dijk (1998) sees ideology as a system of ideas and beliefs that is shared by members of social groups, organizations and institutions and that reflect the societal propositions and interests of social groups. Oktar (2001, p. 314) defines ideology as "presentations of who we are, what we stand for, what our values are and what our relationships with others are". This is particularly useful for our research as it focuses on the role ideology plays in the formation of "us" and "them" groups in society. Modern theories of ideology believe that ideology is almost everywhere in human action. Van Dijk (1998, p. 17) finds that "ideologies are typically, though not exclusively, expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication". Ideological analysis, according to him, involves examining linguistic features of various structures of different levels of discourse that are relevant for efficient expression and persuasion of ideological meanings, including surface structures (e.g. phonology and graphics), syntax (e.g. the use of passive sentences, agentless passives or nominalizations), lexicon (e.g. the choice of words and the use of euphemisms), and so on. To refer to the same persons, groups or social issues, the language users generally have a choice of several words based on genre, personal, social and socio-cultural contexts. The choice is often ideologically based. For instance, to report the same news, the reporter may choose "freedom fighter" rather than "terrorist", or "pro-choice" rather than "pro-life" to emphasize the positive implications of ingroup opinions and values and the negative ones of those of the Others. As a result, the same news event would be reported differently by different newspapers depending on the underlying ideology of the newspaper (Fang, 2001; Lee & Craig, 1992; Wang, 1993, Xu, 1999).

C. Lexical Classification

In Halliday's (1994) linguistic theory, vocabulary or lexis is a major determinant of ideational structure. He points out that lexical classification is a fundamental way of cognition for human beings. Since different individuals have different social experiences, they would possess diverse sociolinguistic abilities, which may influence their language use from the perspective of ideational experience. It would be incorrect to think that every individual possesses a single and united world-view or ideology that encompasses all aspects of his or her experience. Kress and Hodge (1979) point out that classification is regarded as the linguistic ordering of the world. Classification is based on language and thought, and without acts of classification nobody can relate concepts or words to new concepts or messages because words and concepts only exist through classification. And classification means that the description of the objects or events is mainly realized by polarized lexical choice (Xin, 2005). Words convey the imprint of society and of value judgments in particular – they convey connoted as well as denoted meanings. Lexis is always under the control of ideology, which has an impact on people's choice of words. In news discourse, the ideologies and opinions may hide in the lexical choice.

As an analytical tool of CDA, lexical classification can effectively help to expose the hidden ideology in discourses. Zhang (2011, p.32) asserts that language can not be used to describe things objectively, and the label or definition people fix on things and objects does not always reflect their intrinsic characters. It is because that under most occasions, people are influenced by their levels of cognition and their emotional experience, which would make their principles different in classification. For example, different terms are available for referring to the same object, but they may differ in a number of dimensions. For instance, the word pairs like *radical/liberal*, *terrorists/freedom fighters*, *kill/eliminate* and *censorship/reporting restrictions* can generate distinctions in ideology that is based on different principles of classification. Those word pairs are termed as dispute paradigm (Trew, 1979, p.135), which refers that a group of words could be used under a certain situation, but different choices of words would mean different stands of ideologies.

In Zhang's theory (2011), words can be divided into three categories according to their emotional coloring: commendatory words, derogatory words and neutral words. Commendatory terms are words with active evaluation that show the user's favorable attitude to his or her descriptive objects. Derogatory terms are words with negative evaluation that reflect the user's negative attitude. Neutral terms are words with no evaluation, and by using neutral words the user makes no comments on his or her descriptive objects but only states the fact. Both commendatory and derogatory words

have evaluative coloring. Therefore, journalists may use different coloring words at will, especially adjectives and adverbs, which will carry ideologies behind them.

In the present research, the authors chose different lexis used to describe the same object or process in news reporting the same accident in the websites of *China Daily* and *The Washington Post*, utilizing the analytical tool of lexical classification. By comparing different evaluative coloring in the chosen words, the study tries to uncover the ideologies behind the words and further to explore causes of the difference from different aspects. To be specific, the present study addresses the following three research questions:

- 1) What are the similarities and differences in the choice of words in news reporting the same accidents in *China Daily* and *The Washington Post*?
- 2) What image is China portrayed in the news reports of *China Daily* and *The Washington Post*?
- 3) What causes the differences in news reporting the same accident in the two newspapers?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

The data of the present study came from news reports on the official websites of *China Daily* and *The Washington Post*. There was a purposive sampling procedure of selecting the news reports. That is, the data collection and the sampling were based on our judgment of popularity and the influence of the news event and the purpose of the study. First, three accidents which happened in China in recent years were chosen by their domestic and international influence. For each accident, the authors selected two news reports from both sides. All the reports were published in the two newspapers within the first week after the accident has happened. Then, some words of defining and describing the accident from both news papers were paired for comparison. Thus, all together there are six sample news reports. The length of each news report is within 1000 words, the average being 762.3 words per piece. Table 1 shows the news reports for the analysis in the present study.

TABLE 1
NEWS REPORTS CHOSEN FOR ANALYSIS IN THIS STUDY

News Events	<i>China Daily</i>	<i>The Washington Post</i>
1. The 2011 Wenzhou train accident	Train accident kills 22; over 100 hospitalized July 24, 2011. 00:24	The politics of China's high-speed train wreck July 28, 2011
2. The 2013 Beijing Tiananmen Square attack	ETIM terror group 'behind Tian'anmen suicide attack' Nov 2, 2013. 00:36:54	China censors news of an SUV plowing into a crowd in Tiananmen Square, killing five October 28, 2013
3. The 2014 Kunming attack	At least 29 dead, 130 injured in Kunming violence March 2, 2014. 08:13	Knife-wielding attackers kill 29 at Chinese train station; more than 100 injured March 2, 2014.

Note: The sentences in bold are the headlines of the news reports and the dates are the time they were published on the websites.

B. Research Procedure

The present study adopts qualitative approach to analyze accident news report samples from the websites of *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* respectively, striving to find out the differences in word choice and to gain a better understanding of the relationship between language and ideology. All the news samples are applied with the analytical tool of lexical classification in Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar, and a detailed contrastive analysis is made in these chosen word pairs from the news reports in *China Daily* and *The Washington Post*. The chosen words have different meanings and forms; however, in the news reports they are used to address the same person, depict the same object or describe the event and so on. The findings of the analysis are illustrated with typical word pairs as examples picked up from the news samples. And the explanations of the words' meanings are all referred to the definitions in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2008).

IV. ANALYSIS

In the following part, word pairs are shown from the news reports on *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* respectively, which report the same accident. The words are analyzed according to the lexical classification theory.

A. 2011 Wenzhou Train Accident

In news reporting of the 2011 Wenzhou train accident, *China Daily* (CD) and *The Washington Post* (WP) adopt different ways to describe the train accident. Here, six pairs of words from the two reports in CD and WP respectively are compared and analyzed.

TABLE 2
PAIRS OF WORDS REPORTING WENZHOU TRAIN ACCIDENT

Pairs	In <i>China Daily</i>	In <i>The Washington Post</i>	Word Categories
(1)	accident	catastrophe	words used for defining the event
(2)	The Ministry of Railways	The communist party	
(3)	rear-ended	collided with	words used for describing the event
(4)	occurred	produced	
(5)	confirmed	promised	
(6)	plunge onto	plunge off	

China Daily (CD) and *The Washington Post* (WP) have adopted two different terms to name the train accident. Shown in word pair (1), CD calls it “an accident” while WP defines it as “a long-feared catastrophe”. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2008), “accident” refers to “something that happens unexpectedly and is not planned in advance”. The word “catastrophe” also refers to great suffering and damage, but it implies terrible misfortune caused by latent factors and is hard to compensate. WP has exaggerated the accident by connoting that the railway accident may be caused by other factors, say, human factors which show China’s incompatibility in high-speed railway construction. In CD’s report, it is an unexpected accident. By using the word “catastrophe”, the reporter from WP actually has doubted and criticized China’s high-speed railway system.

Word pair (2) presents how the reports name the relative authorities. In CD, the reporter says “The Ministry of Railways deals with the accident in full efforts”, telling the readers that the relative authorities have tried every effort to compensate for the accident, which shows the ministry’s sense of responsibility towards the accident. In WP, the reporter says “the terrible collision is not only a human tragedy but also a major blow to the credibility of the communist government”. In western countries, *communist* is an unpopular and unpleasant word and connotes the meaning of tyrannical and dictatorship. The following two sentences in the report from WP show the western reporter’s attitude towards communist clearly:

Example 1 Communist party officials immediately undermined that pledge by instructing Chinese media not to report the matter aggressively but rather “to use ‘in the face of great tragedy, there’s great love’” as the major theme. (from *The Washington Post*, July 28, 2011)

Example 2 Communist party officials instructs Chinese media that “Do not question. Do not elaborate. Do not associate.” (from *The Washington Post*, July 28, 2011)

By using the term “the Communist government” instead of the directly relevant authority, the WP reporter may want to seek resonance from other western capitalist countries and criticize communist leadership.

Word pair (3) shows how the accident happens. In CD, the reporter depicts the accident as “a train rear-ended by another train” while WP describes it as “two trains collide with each other”. The word “collide” means two vehicles crashed into each other and usually on purpose. So the reporter from WP tries to deepen the readers’ impression that the train incident is a catastrophe possibly caused by human factors.

Pair (4) lists two verbs to describe the cause of the accident. In CD “occurred” is used in the sentence “the accident occurred after the train was hit by lightning and lost drive” while in WP “produced” is used in “China’s high-speed rail produced the long-feared catastrophe”. “Occurred” means something happen that is not intended while “produced” means to create, to cause. The reporter from WP connotes that the Chinese government has created the accident, which shows the government’s inefficiency.

Pair (5) shows the reaction of China’s Ministry of Railways. In CD, the ministry “confirmed” the accident and then took effective measures after the accident. In WP, the reporter says “the Ministry of Railways in Beijing then promised a ‘serious’ and ‘honest’ investigation”. The word “confirmed” makes readers believe that the ministry has shown its responsibility for the accident. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2008), “promised” refers that “to make something seem likely to happen; to show signs of something”, which gives readers a feeling that the ministry may not seriously probe into the accident. The reporter from WP has purposely created a negative attitude of the Chinese authority in dealing with the accident.

Pair (6) depicts the train derailment. In CD the reporter uses “plunge onto the ground” to show that four cars of the train derail and falls to the ground. In WP the reporter describes the trains “plunge off the bridge” and gives no detailed description, leaving the terrible train-hanging image to the readers. Here the reporter from WP actually exaggerates the fact.

When analyzing the words in CD and WP, we find that CD defines the accident as an unexpected incident, and the Chinese government has took effective measures immediately to deal with the accident, trying to compensate for the lost. CD reports the accident seriously and discloses the accident in detail, and it shows a picture of people come to help each other at the accident site. In the accident report of WP, the reporter has expressed doubts on China’s high-speed railway system and railway construction, criticizing the Chinese government. The report says “China’s high-speed rail system epitomizes the inherent flaws of authoritarian governance, not its strengths”. WP contributes the tragedy to China’s lack of mature ability to develop the high-speed railway system, because they think that, under the leadership of a communist government, the communist party has boasted China’s achievements. The reporter from WP says “the high-speed rail program operated pretty much as you would expect in a one-party state with a controlled media and no

effective checks and balances”. Behind the word expressions chosen, the reporter shows his or her strong disapproval against China’s leadership of the communist party, which creates catastrophic accidents like this.

B. 2013 Beijing Tiananmen Square Attack

On 28 October 2013 a car crashed in Tiananmen Square, killing five people. To the same accident, *China Daily* and the *Washington Post* describe it in different choices of words. Here we pick up five pairs of words to analyze.

TABLE 3
PAIRS OF WORDS REPORTING BEIJING TIANANMEN SQUARE ATTACK

Pairs	In <i>China Daily</i>	In <i>The Washington Post</i>	Word Categories
(1)	suicide attack/attack	crash/car accident	words used for defining the event
(2)	terrorism	pro-democracy protest	
(3)	terrorist	ethnic group	
(4)	terrorist activities	tactic	
(5)	fight against	protest against	words used for describing the event
(6)	combat	safety precaution	

Pair (1) shows how CD and WP address the same accident in slightly different ways. In CD, the reporter names it “a suicide attack”, and in WP, the reporter simply calls it “a car accident”. Compared with the term “suicide attack”, “car accident” is less serious and obviously causes less impact on the society. Here WP tries to defend for the terrorists, transforming their crimes into normal accidents.

Pairs (2), (3) and (4) are relevant terms in CD and WP. In CD, the attack is defined as “terrorism”, the attackers are termed as “terrorists” and their behaviors are called “terrorist activities”. While in WP, the western reporters call the attack “pro-democracy protest”, name the attackers “ethnic group”, and simply regard the attackers’ behavior as a kind of “tactic” to protest against the government. The report in WP chooses the neutral words to describe the terrorists, trying to lessen readers’ negative impressions on the terrorists. The reporter tries to fix a justified label for the terrorists and to defend the terrorists’ crazy doings.

Word pairs (5) and (6) show two different descriptions to those kinds of attacks. In CD, the report says “Yang Yujun, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said on Thursday the Chinese army will combat various terrorist activities when necessary according to government instructions under the National Defense Law and Emergency Response Law of China.” And experts say “This type of terrorist attack can happen anywhere, in any city, in any country. Therefore, we have to take effective and important action and cooperate to fight all types of terrorism”. Obviously, the report in CD calls on international cooperation to fight against various terrorist activities. While in WP the reporter says “The square retains an illustrious status for many Chinese, including those who want to protest against the government [...]. In recent years, fire extinguishers have been placed throughout the square as a safety precaution”. The former focuses on the combat against terrorism, but the latter regards the terrorists as protesters. So WP regards the behavior of the attackers as being justifiable, and shows in the report the behavior is like “Tibetans set themselves on fire since February 2009 protesting against Chinese rule in their homeland”. WP assumes that it is the fault of Chinese government that cannot develop a good relationship with the protesters. WP has actually criticized the Chinese government instead of condemning the terrorists.

The report in CD has chosen the derogatory terms to describe the terrorists, depicting the cruel and crazy terrorists and the report says that “Many countries, including China, are under threat amid increasing global terrorist activities and China is more determined to fight against violence and terrorist crimes”. The report in WP, on the other hand, has tried to weaken the terrorists’ bad influence on society by adopting various neutral terms to describe them as “protesters”. Report in WP says “Police flooded the historic square. It was the scene of a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 1989.” Through its neutral report of the terrorists, WP actually connotes its attitude that Communist China is a country that lacks democracy, which awake people’s awareness to protest against the government. So WP defines the terrorists as “ethnic group” and their terrorism activities the “tactic” to fight for democracy and in its report the reporter says “the case of self-immolation has been a widely used form of protest here [the square]”. Instead of condemning the cruel terrorists, WP criticizes China’s evil politics and defends the terrorists. The westerners have always regarded China as a nation under the control of an evil power, the dictatorship of communist party, which makes China a country lack democracy and human rights.

C. 2014 Kunming Attack

The 2014 Kunming Attack was a terrorist attack in Kunming, Yunnan, on 1 March 2014. The incident killed 29 civilians and 4 attackers, leaving more than 140 others injured. Table 4 shows five pairs of words in news reporting of the accident in CD and WP.

TABLE 4
PAIRS OF WORDS REPORTING 2014 KUNMING ATTACK

Pairs	In <i>China Daily</i>	In <i>The Washington Post</i>	Word Categories
(1)	terrorism	attack/ assault	words used for defining the event
(2)	terrorist	Muslim extremist/ethnic minorities	
(3)	report	cancel	words used for describing the event
(4)	urged	ordered	
(5)	cruel	gruesome	

Just like the 2013 Beijing Tiananmen Square attack, the 2014 Kunming attack also reflects difference in how CD and WP represent the accident. As pair (1) shows, CD describes the accident “terrorism”, while WP simply calls it an “attack” or “assault”. WP has not regarded it as a serious terrorist behavior, and the reporter thinks that in communist China behaviors like these are “tactics” for “pro-democracy protesters” to protest against the government. WP connotes that it is the Chinese government that should be criticized rather than the “protesters”.

Pair (2) has a direct relation to pair (1), which concerns how the two different newspapers call the attackers. Like the 2013 Beijing Tiananmen Square attack, CD calls the attackers “terrorists” while WP gives them a neutral name, “Muslim extremist” or “ethnic minorities”. The report in WP has tried to lessen readers’ bad and negative impressions on the terrorists, and the paper merely calls them ethnic minorities, the normal social group members of a society. It has defended the terrorists, and at the same time, criticized the Chinese government.

Word pair (3) shows the difference in news reporting of this accident. In CD, Chinese netizens hope the mainstream media could provide “immediate and transparent report”, so here the readers and netizens are concerned with the speed of news reporting on site. However, the report in WP says that the attack on Chinese social media is “censored” and the accident news does not appear on the front pages of many Chinese newspapers. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2008), the word “cancel” means “to remove the parts of a book, film/movie, etc. that are considered to be offensive, immoral or a political threat”. Through this word, the reporter from WP actually tries to portray the Chinese government as a dictator, and under the reign of Chinese government, Chinese people and media have no freedom of speech.

Pair (4) presents different verbs used to depict the same words said by President Xi Jinping. In CD, the reporter says “President. Xi Jinping has urged the law enforcement to investigate and solve the case of Kunming terrorist attack with all-out efforts and punish the terrorists in accordance with the law”. While in WP, the reporter says “China’s President. Xi Jinping ordered all-out efforts to punish the attackers”. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2008), the word “order” means “to use one’s position of authority to tell somebody to do something or say that something must happen”. The reporter of WP again actually represents the Chinese president as China’s dictator.

Pair (5) shows two adjectives adopted by CD and WP to describe the terrorists. In CD, the word “cruel” frequently appears in describing the terrorists, while in WP, the adjective “gruesome” appears. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2008), “cruel” means “having a desire to cause pain and suffering”, and “gruesome” means “very unpleasant and filling one with horror, usually because it is connected with death or injury”. Compared with “gruesome”, the word “cruel” not only presents the horror scene but shows the terrorists’ desire to conduct terrorist activities, which cannot be reflected by “gruesome” in the “attackers”. The reporter from WP still tries to weaken the attackers’ identities as terrorists.

Compared with WP, the report in CD adopts derogatory terms to describe the terrorists and condemns the terrorist activities. It suggests China’s strong disapproval against the terrorists and determination to punish the criminals. Through the report, China has called on the international society to together fight against the terrorism. To the criminals, China holds the attitudes of anger, hatred, and zero tolerance. However, the report in WP uses neutral terms to describe the terrorists and adopts derogatory terms to describe the Chinese government. The reporter tries every effort to defend terrorists’ behavior and fixes a justified label on the terrorists. The lexis and syntax strongly suggest that China is a country with no human rights, and reporter from WP says “many comments about the attack on Chinese social media were censored and the news did not appear on the front pages of many newspapers”. So they think the Chinese people have no right of free speech, for the authorities will censor everything that appears in the media.

Applying the analytical tool of lexical classification, this part conducts a critical analysis of the six news reports, three of which are selected from *China Daily* and three are from *The Washington Post*. After a systematic contrastive analysis, it is found that different words have been chosen by *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* in news reporting the same accident. The reports in CD show China’s solidarity, harmony and that the whole nation will work hard together to overcome the difficulties. The reporters from WP portray China as an evil country, and the communist government sacrifices people’s interests to show off its achievements. China lacks democracy and human rights due to the dictatorship of its government, which results in the bad relation between the country and its people. WP defines terrorists as “protesters”, which actually shows its disapproval and criticism against the Chinese government. The differences in word choice demonstrate that accident news reports, which seem objectively reported, are not as neutral as traditionally thought. Accident news reported by western countries reflects their ideologies and the western media exert their ideologies on readers.

V. CONCLUSION

Through the analytical tool of lexical classification, the present study has made a contrastive analysis of six news reports about the 2011 Wenzhou train accident, the 2013 Beijing Tiananmen Square attack and the 2014 Kunming attack from two different newspapers. After a detailed contrastive analysis of the six news samples in terms of lexical classification, answers to the research questions are as follows:

There are similarities and differences in the lexical choice in news reporting the same events. *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* have both reported those accidents but there are remarkably differences in word choice. In *China Daily*, the newspaper depicts the accidents seriously and chooses derogatory terms to portray the accident causers, the terrorists, and the reporters adopt commentary words to describe the government actions. In *The Washington Post*, the reporters purposely exaggerate the negative impact of the accidents and choose neutral terms to portray the accident causers, and the reporters use derogatory words to describe the government actions.

(2) The two newspapers depict China's image differently. In *China Daily*, reporters portray China as a place where individuals are free to say what they want to, the Chinese government will do its best to put people's interests on the top agenda and Chinese people are willing to help each other. It portrays a positive image of China. In *The Washington Post*, reporters depict China as a place where people have no right for free speech and Chinese government is inefficient, irresponsible and cares less for its people. It portrays a negative image of China.

(3) There are mainly three reasons contributing to the differences in news reporting the same accident. Politically, China is a communist country which has a different political system from the western countries. Western nations thus regard China as a threat to them and they are afraid of China's increasing mightiness, so they always catch every opportunity to attack China. Secondly, western nations' Christian culture makes them believe that they are sent by God to govern the world and help those who need help, so they think they should emancipate the victims of oppression from the dictatorship of communist China, thus to ignore the Chinese culture. Thirdly and finally, western countries have long held the prejudice against China. In their eyes, China is an unenlightened country with no human rights.

After the contrastive analysis of the six news reports from *China Daily* and *The Washington Post*, the present study proves that news reporters intentionally implant and invest ideologies into news reports by choosing words of their interests for the purpose of impacting on readers' perception about the accidents being reported. The study is significant in the following aspects. Firstly, the present study proves that word choices can be used by news reporters to convey their ideologies. This reminds teachers to pay more attention to word choices rather than simply focusing on the text meaning or sentence structures in their lecturing to language or journalist students. What is more, students ought to be encouraged to do some critical reading of news, which will help to develop their critical reading ability. Second, the contrastive study, analyzed by the tool of lexical classification in this study shows that social accident news reports which look neutral, but actually are not value-free. The study also proves that the analytical tool adopted by the authors is effective in analyzing accident reports from the perspective of CDA, which will provide followers with some useful references. Finally, the present study shows how American newspaper, *The Washington Post*, depicts China's image in a negative perspective, so it further suggests that Chinese government make every effort to sustain China's positive image on the international stage and try to satisfy people's needs to the maximum, and to reduce the opportunities for western reporters to negatively depict China's image.

Apart from the major findings and significances of the present study, the present study also has limitations. On the one hand, the present study is restricted to the analysis of six accident news reports selected from *China Daily* and *The Washington Post* respectively. The examples are few and limited in number, which means findings of the study may be limited. On the other hand, due to the design and purpose of the study, some other expressions of ideology, for example, some visual signs such as photos, layouts, typography were not analyzed, so it is hard to interpret the ideological assumptions in depth. For further study, it is suggested that the analytic data should be collected from more news samples, not just restricted to the same topic of accident news in two different newspapers but the similar accident news in more than two newspapers. Moreover, some more comprehensive framework should be employed to conduct exhaustive critical analysis on news discourse.

APPENDIX. NEWS REPORTS SELECTED FOR THE ANALYSIS IN THIS STUDY

Sample 1. *China Daily*

Headline: Train accident kills 22; over 100 hospitalized

From: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-07/24/content_12969133.htm

Sample 2. *The Washington Post*

Headline: The politics of China's high-speed train wreck

From: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-politics-of-chinas-high-speed-train-wreck/2011/07/27/gIQAgedXdI_story.html

Sample 3. *China Daily*

Headline: ETIM terror group 'behind Tian'anmen suicide attack'

From: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-11/02/content_17075494.htm

Sample 4. *The Washington Post*

Headline: China censors news of an SUV plowing into a crowd in Tiananmen Square, killing five

From: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-censors-busy-as-jeep-plows-into-crowd-in-tiananmen-square-killing-five/2013/10/28/768f7b88-3fc2-11e3-b028-de922d7a3f47_story.html

Sample 5. *China Daily*

Headline: At least 29 dead, 130 injured in Kunming violence

From: http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-03/02/content_17315118.htm

Sample 6. *The Washington Post*

Headline: Knife-wielding attackers kill 29 at Chinese train station; more than 100 injured

From: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/knife-attack-at-chinese-train-station-leaves-28-dead-more-than-100-injured/2014/03/01/0b20ed8e-a195-11e3-9ba6-800d1192d08b_story.html

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