外语·文化·教学论丛

Western News Discourse in Cultural Context

文化语境中的西方新闻话语

吴越民 著

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Preface

With the high-speed development of society and the acceleration of globalization, news discourse has demonstrated its increasing importance. As a public discourse, journalistic English differs from the common sense of linguistic discourse in that it displays some features distinct from discourses such as popularity, impersonality, systematization and newness, etc. News discourse can act as a mirror reflecting the society and cultural backgrounds as well as exert influence on people's values and social concepts by disseminating messages concerning people and events. Recently researches on news discourse have entered a prosperous period in full swing and have drawn wide concerns from academic circles. News discourse is the language embodying reporting contents as well as the manifestation of standpoint to certain extent, especially in reporting the important news, which considers mutual exchanges and influencing audiences' positions as its goals, transmitting evaluative messages and maximizing ideological penetration. As a discourse reflecting ideology, news discourse inevitably expresses the social and political attitudes of news producers, which involves various social and cultural elements. From the perspective of news discourse we should not only analyze the expressing styles of journalistic English, but also probe into the social and cultural elements embedded in news discourse. Research on news discourse in cultural context will be conducive to better understanding and avoiding misunderstanding among diverse cultural groups. Meanwhile by analyzing news texts in a more clear and systematic way we will no longer confine our research to the interpretation of news texts, but extend the research to the cognitive, social, cultural, political and historical contexts of discourse, gaining an insight into the interactive relationship between news discourse and social, cultural change so as to expand the research fields of communication and develop relevant cultural strategies.

This book intends to take news texts as the object of discourse analysis and mainly focuses on analyzing an important genre of discourse in media: news in newspapers. As the primary medium in traditional media, newspaper is undergoing the unprecedented revolution in terms of social practices, social audiences and the capacity of communication, with its political and cultural functions demonstrating more and more power of social

communication. It is through newspaper that people are informed of the truth about the events happening recently and get to know the life styles of people around the world, their customs and social cultures. News discourse is unavoidably influenced by the form and tinged with the color of the social and political systems it belongs to, embodying some political and cultural stipulations. Thus, news discourse in newspaper is not merely the discourse related to linguistic structures and communicative functions. This book places the research on news discourse in cultural context, illustrating that discourse is not only the carrier of culture but also has an impact on cognitive thinking as well as on culture, laying emphasis on the relationship between news discourse and social practices of human beings.

This book adopts the methodology of combining logical argumentation and case study to analyze the news texts collected from English newspapers, news agencies, some news magazines and TV news of the past twenty years, including the following: the *Times*, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, the *Financial Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Reuters*, the *Associated Press*, the *British Broadcasting Corporation*, etc. We will discuss the disseminating situation of English news in newspapers, linguistic features of journalistic English and the communicative power of news culture. Meanwhile we will elaborate on the components and connotations of discourse analysis theory, analyze its characteristics and types and probe into its practical application.

This book discusses news, news discourse, news culture and news values, news headlines, news lead, news structures, lexical and rhetorical devices of newspaper reports to give readers a deeper insight into the Western news discourse. However, it is not merely a research on the systems and rules of linguistic signs in terms of grammar, phonetics, vocabulary and text, analyzing news reports at the simplex, nonrepresentational level. We will integrate the news discourse theory with the core theory of contemporary cultural study, social study and communication study so as to probe deep into contemporary meanings of news discourse analysis, studying the cultural semiotics of news discourse, exploring the political, cultural tradition of news discourse and the construction of social structures of discourse.

The book consists of nine chapters:

Chapter 1 is a brief introduction to journalism, main English newspapers and news services in Britain and the United States of America.

Chapter 2 explains the basic concepts of discourse, news discourse, ideology, and cultural semiotics.

Chapter 3 explores news, news functions, news writing, news culture, and news values.

Chapter 4 examines news genres, including the classification of news (hard news and

soft news), news formulas (the inverted pyramid form, narrative formula, simplified extended conflict formula), editorials, columns, reviews, and types of features (personality profiles, human interest stories, trend stories, in-depth stories, and analysis piece).

Chapter 5 discusses the functions of headlines, guidelines for writing headlines, the lexical and grammatical characteristics of headlines, and the rhetorical devices in news headlines as well as their cultural elements.

Chapter 6 illustrates the principles of news leads, the format of leads, and the types of leads (such as the direct lead, the delayed lead, the blind lead, the direct address lead, the direct quote lead, the contrast lead, the question lead, and the narrative lead).

Chapter 7 is an analysis of the lexical styles of English news texts, including news words, heavy use of attributes with hyphens, jargons, short and simple words, colloquialisms and idioms, fuzzy terms as well as their social-cultural reflections.

Chapter 8 is a study of rhetorical devices of English news texts, including metaphorical words, euphemisms, irony, numbers, quotations and attributions in cultural context.

Chapter 9 draws a conclusion of the book. It is followed by the glossary of phrases, terms, and concepts commonly used in journalism.

The whole book written in English intends for teachers and students in colleges and universities, journalists, foreign-related staff and those who are proficient in English.

Wu Yuemin
April 10, 2013

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Chapter 1

Journalism, Newspapers and News Services

Journalism is the discipline of collecting, analyzing, verifying and presenting information regarding current events, trends, issues and people.

1.1 Journalism

Journalism is the collection and periodical publishing of news, which is any authored text, in written or visual form, which claims to be (i.e. is presented to its audience as) a truthful statement about, or record of, some hitherto unknown (new) feature of the actual, social world. Journalism is the timely reporting of events at the local, provincial, national and international levels. Reporting involves the gathering of information through interviewing and research, the results of which are turned into a fair and balanced story for publication or for television or radio broadcast.

People who write journalism are called "journalists". They might work at newspapers, magazines, websites, or for TV or radio stations. Journalists inform society about itself and make public what would otherwise be private. The most important characteristic shared by good journalists is curiosity. Good journalists love to read and want to find out as much as they can about the world around them. Journalism is variously said to be the fourth estate of the realm, to be part of a public sphere, to support a free press or to inculcate us with the ideology of the ruling class.

1.1.1 The Purposes of Journalism

Journalism has four main reasons for being: to inform, to interpret, to guide, to entertain. It performs other important functions, such as the circulation of advertising and the dissemination of a vast mass of information and comment that hardly come under the general concept of news.

To broadcast news is the first concern of journalism. As the American Society of Newspaper Editors has put it, "It is the primary function of newspapers to communicate to the human race what its members do, feel, and think."

It is for this, the news function, that journalism enjoys the protection of the federal and state constitutions. Society extends protection because of the responsibility of the press for communicating the news. As James Russel Wiggins, former editor of the *St.Paul Pioneer Press* and *St.Paul Dispatch* and later managing editor of the *Washington Post*, has pointed out: These rights and privileges are warranted because civilization as we understand it could not exist if there were no facilities for the dissemination of news. Without the news, individuals in society would lack that sense of identity but for which the creation of formal and informal law are not possible…

H.G.Wells[1] once said the Roman Empire could not endure because there were no newspapers—no methods of apprising the outlying peoples of the behavior of the center.

Today, journalism's first purpose and responsibility is to make certain what the people shall know. This responsibility calls for complete objectivity in the news.

The need for interpreting and explaining the news in our day and age is readily apparent. Life has become so complex and its interests so manifold that even the specialists become baffled in their own field of knowledge. The ordinary human being caught in a maze of economics, science or invention needs to be led by the hand through its intricacies. Accordingly, present-day journalism sees to it that, along with its announcement of a fact, event, or theory, the reader or listener also gets explanation, background material, interpretation, and diagrams. These are all aimed at helping an individual to achieve a better understanding of the significance of what he reads or hears. In line with the growing trend toward specialization, the best journalism employs men and women who have an adequate background of knowledge in their particular fields to provide the average person with these explanations. A great part of today's journalistic writing takes the form of this useful and often able exposition.

1 Herbert George Wells, better known as H.G.Wells, was an English writer best known for such science fiction novels as *The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*.

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