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The Construction of China's International Image of a Major Country with a Sense of Responsibility in Diplomatic Discourse

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Abstract: In recent years, China's comprehensive national strength has been strengthened and its international status has been enhanced. As a result, China urgently needs to construct and perfect its own discourse system, and establish a good international image. The international image of a country is an important embodiment of its national image, which comes from "self-presentation" on the one hand, and "evaluation by others" on the other. These two aspects of communication mostly rely on the transmission of various diplomatic activities. Therefore, international image is also the product of the construction of diplomatic discourse. By collecting and sorting out 30 texts of Chinese diplomatic discourse from 2018 to 2021, a corpus was established to form the research object. At the same time, with the help of Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis method, the construction of the international image of China as a "major country" in diplomatic discourse is deeply analyzed from three dimensions of text analysis, discourse production background and process, and social influence. The analysis reveals that China constructs this international image from three main aspects: promoting global economic development, adhering to the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, and maintaining the international order. Meanwhile, through the analysis of the way and process of China's construction of this international image, the rules can be grasped, and then it can help people better understand the analysis of diplomatic discourse.

Keywords: International Image; Diplomatic Discourse Analysis; Political Discourse; Globalization Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Over the past four decades, China has made leaps and bounds in development. The people's living standards have continued to improve and the country's economic and cultural soft power have all improved. At the same time, major changes have taken place in the international order and the world situation. Western countries' inherent cognition of China is mostly stuck in the image of an ancient and backward country. After suffering the impact of modern China, the original western cognitive system is increasingly unable to explain the current image of China. Therefore, for China, changing the country's international image is an issue that cannot be ignored.

National image can be regarded as the comprehensive impression of the media and people on the history, economy, politics, culture and values of a country and its people. This impression usually contains rational evaluation and emotional attitude. Maurice Ndalaha Marshalls (2007) believe that national image is "the sum of the evaluation of the cognition and feelings of a certain country, and an overall impression formed based on all variables of the country" (p. 26). The national image includes international image and domestic image. With the deepening of globalization, the construction of a good international image has become a vital development strategy for each country.

From the perspective of discourse analysis, this paper takes Fairclough's three-dimensional framework as a theoretical method to analyze the target corpus from three dimensions: text analysis, the background and process of text production, and the social impact of discourse. By analyzing the diplomatic discourse generated under the three diplomatic occasions of Chinese President Xi Jinping's speeches, the Chinese Foreign Minister's speeches and Chinese Foreign Ministry

Spokesman's speech at the press conference, this paper tries to find out how China constructs its international image of "a major country with a sense of responsibility".

1.2 Research Significance

For China, it is at an important turning point in building its national image. First of all, China has experienced decades of rapid development, and its comprehensive national strength has been improved. Second, China has learned and absorbed a lot of ways and rules of constructing and spreading a national image dominated by western countries. At last, with the deepening of globalization and the changing international situation, a new world pattern is bound to take shape. Therefore, China, as a rising power, needs to further present a positive national image for the new era.

Theoretically, this paper applies Fairclough's three-dimensional framework to further discover what role diplomatic discourse plays in the construction of the national image and what effects it has produced. By analyzing a particular discourse, the process of its generation and its effect on society can be discovered.

2. Methodology

2.1 Fairclough's Three-dimensional Framework

In this paper, Fairclough's three-dimensional framework is used as the mainly theoretical framework to analyze the data. Fairclough (1992) pointed out that "There is a real need for relevant models of language: for frameworks which turn the insights of linguists into comprehensible and usable forms" (p. 212). In Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis framework, the first dimension is text analysis. It analyzes the general linguistic structure of the whole text from the perspectives of semantic variation, the process of part of speech conversion, metaphorical mechanism, and the attitude and position implied in the text. The second dimension is discursive practice, which analyzes the communication and intertextuality of discourse based on the dialogue and narration in the text, and explores the relationship between the process of text generation and the communicative context. The third dimension of the framework is social practice analysis. The analysis focuses on the power of discourse, that is, the influence of social and cultural factors on the ideology or way of thinking of discourse, and, conversely, the influence of on the feedback of discourse to society, public opinion, power and so on.

Fairclough's framework is chosen in this paper for two reasons. Firstly, this theoretical framework provides a systematic structure and is widely used in discourse analysis. Secondly, the topic of this paper is diplomatic discourse, and Fairclough links specific organizations, institutions with the social level, which is very consistent with the analytical framework of this paper.

2.2 Corpus Techniques for the Study

This study will take the analysis approach based on the corpus and integrate the critical discourse analysis (CDA) into Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. CDA mainly studies the interaction between events in discourse and social, political and cultural factors. In the 1970s, when the concept of discourse analysis was not yet clear, Halliday first interwoven the vocabulary of linguistics with the concepts and problems of the social sciences. According to Halliday (2014), language has three distinct functional components, namely "ideational", "interpersonal" and "textual" (p. 263). Therefore, combined with Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the corpus analysis techniques adopted in this paper is roughly divided into three steps. The first is to describe the formal structure of discourse, including sentence pattern, grammar, and part of speech. The second is to interpret the background of discourse generation, transmission process and concrete embodiment. The third is to explain the interaction and influence between the discourse and the society. Before the text analysis, the data were preprocessed. The first step is noise removal. The author removes words that have no effect on the characteristics of the text, such as time, place, reporter, news agency and so on. The second step is lexicon normalization. Word capitalization needs to

be corrected, and word segmentation steps need to be performed before the original text is imported into the corpus, so that the corpus can be accurately analyzed. And then the AntConc is applied to build a monolingual corpus of the target text, which provided the function of fuzzy retrieval required for this text analysis. All the target texts were imported into the text analysis software AntConc to form a corpus. After filtering out meaningless words and general nouns, through the word list, the word frequency and keywords can be checked to find the topic. With collocates, the relevant collocations of each word can be found, thus finding the context and direction of analysis.

2.3 Corpus for the Study

There are three types of texts analyzed in this paper, namely, the speech of Chinese President Xi Jinping, the speech of the Minister of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the answer of the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China at the press conference. The texts were searched on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and on the People's Daily website from 2018 to 2021. The author analyzes 30 Chinese texts, totaling more than 90,000 words, each of which ranged in length from 1,000 to 10,000 words. These texts are highly analyzable, involve a wide range of topics, various occasions, different contexts, and the speakers are representative and authoritative. The analysis of the corpus combines quantitative analysis with qualitative analysis to explore the structure of the selected texts from the aspects of lexical usage frequency, semantic usage and noun collocation and so on. Quantitative analysis is the first step of the analysis, which includes finding out the high-frequency words, analyzing the context, summarizing the topic, and determining the focuses of the analysis. Quantitative analysis can summarize the data and determine the analysis base to ensure the objectivity and validity of text analysis results. Qualitative analysis is the second step of the whole analysis step. It mainly discovers typical sentences and highly analytical representative sentences, and analyzes their collocation, vocabulary, tone and so on. Qualitative analysis can find typical sentences and meaningful themes and confirm the analytical significance of discourse.

3. Active Promotion of Global Economic Development

In the corpus, words are ranked according to their occurrence frequency. After excluding “China”, “is”, “for”, “we” and other unspecified subject words, meaningless words and modal particles, words related to the economic field have a higher word frequency in all professional fields, among which the word “economy” appears 305 times alone. In consequence, China's attitude and discourse towards the economic field can first be determined as the focus of this study.

In the economic field, “cooperation”, “region”, “trade”, “The Belt and Road Initiative”, “developing countries”, “opening up” and “regional economic integration” are frequently mentioned and used. Therefore, it is necessary to further analyze the collocation and context of these words.

3.1 The Belt and Road Initiative

In the corpus, the word “The Belt and Road” is mentioned 89 times in total. Through further analysis of the corpus, it can be found that when “One Belt and Road” is mentioned, it is often accompanied by words such as “co-construction”, “cooperation” and “development”. For example:

Back translation (1): China will vigorously promote high-quality joint development of “The Belt and Road” and speed up the building of a healthy, digital and green Silk Road for the benefit of more countries and people.

In example (1), many phrases combining verbs and nouns are used, such as “vigorously push forward”, “speed up construction” and “bring benefits to the people” and so on. All of these measures were initiated by China, reflecting a series of positive measures taken by China.

There is no doubt that “The Belt and Road” plays an important role in China's economic activities in the international community. According to the portal of China's Belt and Road, by January 2021, China had signed 205 cooperation documents on One Belt and Road cooperation with 140 countries and 31 international organizations. The world today is

undergoing complex and volatile changes. The negative impact of the global financial crisis still exists, and the world economy is still faced with numerous difficulties. The economic development trend of various countries is also gradually showing a trend of differentiation, the world trade pattern is facing adjustment.

By 2019, the “One Belt and Road” has made substantial progress, including the advancement of several major projects, the development of six major economic corridors, trade and investment totaling about 90 billion dollars. Over the past 30 years and more, China has made great achievements in the reform and opening up, and the economy has been developing continuously. At this time, China put forward the “One Belt and Road” initiative for common economic development, which can reflect China’s friendly concern for world economic development.

3.2 Helping Developing Countries

The term “developing countries” was mentioned 58 times in the corpus. By analyzing the specific corpus, it can be found that, along with this word, there are often these collocations: “to provide support and help”, “to promote economic development”, “to safeguard its interests”, “to provide vaccines” and so on. Here is the example sentence:

Back translation (2): All these fully demonstrate China's value orientation of supporting the unity and development of developing countries and safeguarding their common interests.

In the example (2), phrases such as “support solidarity and development” and “safeguard common interests” are formed through the combination of verbs and nouns, which express China’s concern and support for developing countries.

Due to the relatively backward economic strength and development degree, developing countries are often in a weak position in the international community, and their legitimate interests are often infringed upon. Meanwhile, the backward productive forces make the living standard of the people in these countries relatively low. Therefore, countries should help other developing countries more while developing themselves. Since the 21st century, the cooperation between China and its neighboring developing countries has achieved outstanding results, also, cooperation mechanisms have been enriched and areas of cooperation have been expanded. In fact, further analysis of the context of the corpus shows that, apart from economic development, China is also very concerned about the anti-terrorism situation and the medical level of developing countries, and actively contributes to their “maternal and child health project”. From these aspects, China has conveyed its attitude and international image to the world.

3.3 Adhering to Win-Win Cooperation

In the corpus, words such as “cooperation”, “win-win”, “partnership” and “co-construction” are frequently mentioned, reflecting China’s expectation to achieve win-win and common development in these aspects.

By analyzing the context and collocation of the corpus, it can be found that China has higher requirements and appeals for international cooperation. Here are some examples:

Back translation (3): China is a country that advocates and practices win-win cooperation.

Back translation (4): We should make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all.

The example (3) is a declarative sentence, which simply expresses China’s attitude. The word “should” in the example (4) is not only a statement of China’s actions, but also an appeal, demonstrating China’s spirit of win-win cooperation in the face of economic globalization. Therefore, it is not difficult to find that China’s discourse construction of “win-win cooperation” has three levels.

Firstly, China makes clear its firm position. China is a country that always advocates and practices win-win cooperation. Secondly, China calls for further strengthening of cooperation between countries and further improvement of the cooperation mechanism. Lastly, China also calls on all countries to conduct cooperation in the common interests of mankind while doing their own things well, which meets the expectation of the international community.

Development is not the need of only one country, and crisis is not the problem of only one country. Going it alone will not only slow down development, but also make it more difficult to solve difficulties. Today, with the rapid development of

globalization, win-win cooperation is undoubtedly a major step in keeping with the historical trend of development.

4. The Maintenance of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

There is only one earth, one world. In November 2012, China put forward the concept of “building a community with a shared future for mankind”. The world is complex and volatile, and no country can stay immune from it. Countries are increasingly interconnected and interdependent. A new kind of global value is taking shape, which seeks a new connotation of the common interests and common values of mankind from the perspective of “community”.

4.1 Maintaining Global Peace and Stability

China was once a country plagued by war and darkness. The Chinese people deeply understand the importance of peace. Therefore, we can see that today China is determined to uphold world peace and stability.

In the corpus, the word “security” is mentioned 171 times and the word “stability” is mentioned 78 times, which can be seen that China attaches great importance to global security and stability. Through further analysis of its context and collocation, we can see China’s discourse construction process for maintaining global peace and stability. Here are examples:

Back translation (5): We should also work together to uphold the Iranian nuclear agreement, promote political settlement of international and regional hotspot issues, strengthen trilateral cooperation with Africa and make greater contribution to building a more sustainable and secure world.

Back translation (6): China has always pursued and upheld multilateralism.

Back translation (7): China has become the most important pillar of multilateralism and an indispensable and trustworthy force for world peace and development.

Example (5) includes phrases made up of adverbs, verbs and nouns such as “to jointly safeguard” and “to strengthen cooperation”. From these words, we can see that China calls for all countries to work together to deal with security threats. In example (6) and (7), the words “always”, “most important” and “indispensable” express China’s firm conviction and significance to the maintenance of global security and multilateralism.

On the one hand, China has actively safeguarded people’s security and social stability in all countries and regions. For instance, China has set up the China-Africa Peace and Security Cooperation Fund to support peace, security and peacekeeping cooperation between China and Africa, and continues to provide free military assistance to the African Union (AU).

On the other hand, China is committed to multilateralism. Multilateralism can be seen as a way of international interaction, it emphasizes to think about the foreign policy strategies from the perspective of the whole, the perspective of regional or global, not just one or two countries. It involves the interaction and influence between countries. This shows that multilateralism can not only be used as a tool to coordinate countries to deal with public issues, but also influence the social interaction of countries.

4.2 Protecting the Natural Environment

Ecosystem of the earth is a continuous cycle, so protecting the environment is not a matter for one or a few countries. It needs the joint efforts of people of all countries.

In the corpus, topics related to “climate” were mentioned 40 times in China’s diplomatic activities. Among them, China has always stressed that climate change is a major challenge facing all mankind, and no country can be immune from it. For example:

Back translation (8): China has taken an active part in international cooperation on climate change with a responsible attitude.

Back translation (9): China is ready to work with all parties, including Japan, to promote the full and effective

implementation of the Paris Agreement and build a fair and equitable climate governance mechanism featuring win-win cooperation.

In examples (8) and (9), there are a lot of positive phrases such as “responsible attitude”, “active participation”, “joint promotion” and “active construction” to express positive attitude, which can reflect China’s attitude towards global climate change.

So how is China realizing this? There is one point that needs to be noted. The word “Paris Agreement” appears 14 times in the corpus. Besides, with the appearance of this word, China’s diplomatic language also becomes very firm and positive. For example, “China announces that it will increase its independent national contribution to the Paris Agreement” and “China is an active follower of the Paris Agreement”. This shows that China pays practical attention to the issue of environmental protection.

5. The Construction and Maintenance of International Order

5.1 The Construction and Maintenance of New International Order

The old international order was established by a small number of major countries in accordance with their will and interests while the vast majority of developing countries were in a powerless position. The old international order left many developing countries in an unequal position in the international arena for a long time. As a result, a new international order and a new type of state-to-state relations have gradually been established, and corresponding propositions have also emerged.

In the corpus, “international order” is mentioned 22 times. This word is often accompanied by such figurative words as “vindicator”, “defender”, “builder” and “contributor”. This is a clear and firm statement of China’s attitude and position towards itself. For example:

Back translation (10): China has always been a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development and a defender of the international order.

In example (10), a rhetorical figure of parallelism is used to describe the role China plays in maintaining world peace. The three terms, “builder”, “contributor” and “defender”, are used to emphasize China’s firm position.

The reason for these words is inalienable to China’s historical background. One hundred years ago, China suffered from bullying and experienced the powerlessness of weak countries in the international community. Therefore, today, as one of the largest developing countries in the world, China is actively advocating the establishment and improvement of a new international order of justice and equality, speaking out for those weak countries that are still being exploited. China is a country that crawled out of the mud, it is more willing to speak up for other weak countries. Perhaps this is also why China has used a series of strong words to express itself, and these words have also played their part in the international arena.

5.2 Upholding the Centrality of the United Nations

The United Nations is the core of global governance and the most important governance mechanism. In the corpus, the word “United Nations” is mentioned 124 times, and most of the words used by Chinese spokesmen are collocation words such as “firmly safeguard”, “defend”, “support” and “give full play” to express China’s position. Here are some examples:

Back translation (11): Over the past 50 years, China has upheld the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and supported the authority and due role of the United Nations.

Back translation (12): China firmly upholds the international system with the United Nations at its core.

Back translation (13): China firmly upholds the global governance system with the United Nations at its core, the basic norms governing international relations based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, the authority and status of the United Nations, and the central role of the United Nations in international affairs.

In examples (11), (12), and (13), we can see that almost all phrasal verbs such as “resolutely defend” form sentences or even parallel sentences. Such firm and positive words express China’s attitude and determination to safeguard the core status

of the United Nations.

The production process of China's this type of diplomatic discourse can be analyzed from two perspectives. The first is still the historical reason. China has experienced the looting of the war of aggression and the change of returning to the United Nations. Therefore, China values peace and international organizations that are fair and equal. At the same time, the United Nations system and multilateralism have been impacted to a certain extent by the economic globalization and the sudden COVID-19 epidemic. Therefore, it is imperative for all countries to jointly safeguard the core status of the United Nations.

From the perspective of the discourse practice and social practice of China's diplomatic discourse, it can be seen that China has indeed taken many measures to safeguard the core status of the United Nations, which is embodied in supporting various undertakings of the United Nations. For instance, China is now the second largest contributor of the United Nations membership dues and peacekeeping contributions. Also, China is an active provider of global public products, including agricultural products, economic development projects and information technology products. These measures are not only in line with the spirit of the United Nations, but their social impact is undoubtedly enormous.

Conclusion

National image can show the cultural connotation and national belief of a country. A good national image can not only influence the external cognition and evaluation of a country, but also enhance its international discourse power. This research uses Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis method and analyzes the discourse background, concrete embodiment and social significance of China's diplomatic discourse in constructing the international image of China as a major country. This study argues that China builds its international image from three perspectives: promoting global economic development, building a community with a shared future for mankind, and maintaining and improving the international order.

Specifically, the three-dimensional discourse analysis adopted in this study includes three dimensions: discourse text analysis, discourse practice analysis and social practice analysis. Among them, this paper starts from the corpus material, takes China's diplomatic discourse as the qualitative analysis material, focuses on China's specific actions and background reasons, and thus obtains its social significance.

This study found that China is very concerned about international hot topics and sustainable development issues related to human being, including economy, environment, international system and so on. Under these topics, China's diplomatic discourse also has distinctive features. In most cases, Chinese spokesmen will use positive and affirmative words such as "firmly safeguard", "defend" and "commit" to demonstrate China's firm position and determination to make contributions. The causes of these diplomatic discourses can be roughly divided into two categories. On the one hand, China's national development and historical experience have contributed to China's international support and maintenance of "peace", "justice" and "equality" today. The other is the state of the world today, which is at a time of rapid change. With the rapid development of globalization, there are also many difficulties. The existing international order is constantly being challenged and the situation of various countries is complex. Therefore, countries all over the world must take action to jointly safeguard a sound international environment. For these reasons, China has initiated many multinational cooperation projects to promote economic development, provided various public goods to the world and actively participated in actions initiated by the United Nations. These measures have great social significance. Depending on the source, these social meanings can be divided into two categories. One is the meaning of China's targeted diplomatic discourse under these themes and the other is the social meaning of China's practical actions. The power of words is infinite. China has responded positively to these hot issues in the international community rather than avoiding them. In its diplomatic statements, China has acted from the perspective of the interests of all mankind, which has conveyed to the public an image of a responsible China. In addition, China's actions have had a tangible impact on the international community. Whether it is poverty alleviation, or medical and health care support for underdeveloped areas, these actions have transmitted to the international community the positive energy of contemporary China.

This study also gives rise to some questions worth further thinking. In the process of constructing the responsible image

of China as a major country, there are still some aspects that need to be further improved. China needs to think about how to break through the existing discourse framework, and build a more complete and comprehensive Chinese discourse system.

Today, China has become the world's second largest economy and is becoming an integral part of the world stage. In the communication of foreign discourse, how to build the image of China, and how to tell a good story of China are all important considerations for China to seek long-term development on the world stage.

Due to the limited research results on China's international image of "a major country with a sense of responsibility" in the academic circle at present, and the few literatures combining the perspective of diplomatic discourse with the country's international image, there is not a rich literature and analysis system yet. In addition, the subject of this study involves politics, journalism, diplomacy and other fields, therefore, there are still some theoretical deficiencies in this study.

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