



A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reports on the China’s Visa-Free Policies: A Case Study of China Daily and National Broadcasting Company

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Abstract

China is expanding the openness towards the world through various opening-up measures including the visa-free policies. However, relative reports on mainstream medias between China and the United States express different attitudes toward China’s visa-free policies. Based on Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of discourse, performing an appraisal (attitude) analysis, the present research conducts a comparative critical analysis (CDA) of reports on the “China’s Visa-free Policies” reported by *China Daily* and *National Broadcasting Company*, aiming to uncover those different identities embedded in the two media, and to investigate the distinctions in their discourse practice and social practice. It is found that in *China Daily*, the media representation of China’s visa-free policies is overwhelmingly positive, building China as a responsible, friendly, and internationally constructive country images. However, in *National Broadcasting Company*, negative representations account for more, which emphasizes hidden dangers and worries of travelling to China.

Keywords: China daily, China’s visa-free policies, Comparative CDA, National broadcasting company.

1. Introduction

In recent years China has introduced various measures on attracting international visitors, especially one trial policy launched one year ago, offering unilateral visa exemptions for more countries including America. Not only eligible individuals could visit China for business, tourism, family visits, or simply transit without a visa, with stays of up to 15 days, China has also opened more ports for visa-exempt transit, which allowing travelers from 54 countries to access 35 ports for 144 hours without a visa before heading to a third destination, has streamlined its visa application process, and refined the immigration process to increase efficiency and convenience [1].

Reaffirming the commitment to greater openness as the world’s second-largest economy, China’s vise-free policies and unilateral opening-up are based on the goal of promoting economic globalization and international cooperation, at the same time, promoting China’s own high-quality development and open economy. While different medias from different countries show different opinions and attitudes towards this social issue.

Scholars on critical discourse analysis so far have not extensively addressed the “China’s Visa-free Policies” except for a few studies on the “China’s tourism” and “China’s travel”, explaining how China’s international travelling images are constructed.

From the construction of China’s international imaged, Liu evaluated the image of China through foreign travel blogs, applying Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework as theoretical bases and conducting a critical discourse analysis on blog discourse [2]. Liu believed that the difference political bias and economic conditions among China and western countries was the main reason contributing to a relatively distorted image of China internationally. Apart from Liu, other studies on China’s international image also commonly adopt the method of critical discourse analysis. Liu also conducted an eco-critical discourse analysis by applying Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework, and Liu explains the language use of English travel news from the perspective of attitude resources [3]. After the analysis, the conclusion of “appreciation is adopted most of the time, which is determined by the guiding function of English travel news” is derived.

2. Research Aims and Questions

2.1. Research Aims

The present study aims to conduct a comparative critical discourse analysis of media discourse about the “China’s Vise-free Policies” by Chinese and U.S media under the framework of Fairclough’s three-dimensional model on discourse studies, to investigate the discourse strategies used by *China Daily* (CD) and *National Broadcasting Company* (NBC), and to examine the embedded identities through attitude analysis.

2.2. Research Questions

- This case study has two purposes in general:
- (1) What attitudinal resources and linguistic features are employed in *China Daily* and *National Broadcasting Company* to explain “China’s Vise-free Policies”?
 - (2) What identities effects can be found that contribute to realizing these attitudinal resources?

3. Data Collection and Research Methods

3.1. Data Collection

The present comparative study chooses *China Daily* (CD) and *National Broadcasting Company* (NBC) as data sources because of their popularity, influence, and authority within their respective countries and in the world.

3.2. Research Methods

The present research is both qualitative and quantitative, attempting to examine the embedded identities underlying news reports about the “China’s Visa-free Policies” as a case study. The study uses one analytic tool of functional linguistics: appraisal (attitude). An introduction of attitude analysis is presented below.

The Appraisal model consisting of attitude, engagement, and graduation aims to systematize a varied set of linguistic resources that speakers and writers use to negotiate evaluations with their addresses and to construct solidarity around shared values [4]. The attitude among the three interacting domains is the central area, which can be simply defined as the indication of whether the speaker thinks that something is good or bad [5]. The system of attitude involves three semantic regions: affect, judgement, and appreciation. Affect is concerned with registering positive and negative feelings. Judgement deals with attitudes towards behaviour, which we admire or criticize, praise or condemn. Appreciation involves evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena [6].

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Linguistic Analysis

The appraisal analysis of the present research focuses on the attitude subsystem, which investigates the distributions of different evaluation resources related to China by calculating the frequencies and percentages of relevant word use (see Table 1).

Table 1. Attitude subsystem in CD and NBC.				
Media	Types	Positive	Negative	Total (percentage)
China Daily	Affect	1	0	1 (3.57%)
	Judgement	11	0	11 (39.29%)
	Appreciation	12	4	16 (57.14%)
Total		24 (85.71%)	4 (14.29%)	28(100%)
National Broadcasting Company	Affect	0	4	4 (18.18%)
	Judgement	3	3	6 (27.27%)
	Appreciation	4	8	12 (54.55%)
Total		7 (31.82%)	15 (68.18%)	22 (100%)

From Table 1, in general, it can be seen that *NBC* (68.18%) tends to use many more negative evaluations when it mentions China-related actions, compared with *CD* (14.29%). In *CD*, the use of positive evaluations accounts for the majority of the total (85.71%), while in *NBC*, the use of negative evaluations exceeds that of positive evaluations by about 35%. Furthermore, *CD* uses evaluation of judgement and appreciation more frequently than *NBC*, and *NBC* uses evaluation of affect more than *CD*. Table 2 lists out the most frequent word use in each of the three systems of attitude in *CD* and *NBC* respectively.

Table 2 . The most frequent word use in CD and NBC.		
Types Media	China Daily	National Broadcasting Company
Affect	committed	warned, warns, caution
Judgement	expand, expanded, expanding	N/A
Appreciation	attract, attracted, attracting	wrongful, wrongfully

From Table 2, it can be seen that the two media stands evaluate China’s visa-free policies from different perspectives.

Extract 1: affect

- (1) As the world’s second-largest economy, China is *committed* to promoting economic globalization and international cooperation through unilateral opening-up, which is also conducive to promoting its own high-quality development and the building of an open economy. (*CD*)
- (2) The Level 3 advisory, the second-highest level, had *warned* about “the risk of wrongful detentions” in China, where more Americans are detained than in any other foreign country, according to the Dui Hua Foundation, an advocacy group. (*NBC*)

In Example 1, China is endowed with positive affect “committed”, which reflects China’s responsibility for globally economic development through visa-free policies and other measures to expand openness. It can be seen in *CD* that China is evaluated as an image of responsible major country as the second-largest country in the world. However, in Example 2, negative affect “warned” as process is used to advise Americans to reconsider the security of China’s vise-free policy and their plans to visit China, indicating that travelling in China has an unsafe and hidden danger.

Extract 2: judgement

(1) *Expanding* unilateral opening-up is also China's *consistent* policy toward the least developed countries. Based on its large domestic market, China has *accelerated* its unilateral opening-up to the least developed countries. (CD)

(2) Last month the State Department lowered its travel advisory for China from Level 3, *advising Americans to reconsider* travel, to Level 2, or "exercise increased caution," *putting it on par with* the travel advisories for France and Germany. (NBC)

In Example 1, "consistent" gives China a positive judgement based on persistent policy of openness towards the least developed countries, building up an impressive and friendly image of China's openness to welcome other countries. Furthermore, positive judgement is also expressed in different ways, for instance in this example, "expand" and "accelerate" act as processes to show the kindness and benefits of China's visa-free policies and other unilateral opening-up policies. In Example 2, the State Department advise Americans to reconsider travel to China, showing concerns and worry on China's visa-free policies, which also indicates the media's negative judgement of insecurity of China's travel.

Extract 3: appreciation

(1) China's visa-free policies, along with *optimized* payment options and other *visitor-friendly* services, have made traveling to the country more convenient, *attracting* an increasing number of foreign travelers. (CD)

(2) The language about *wrongful* detentions has been removed in the updated advisory, though it still warns of "arbitrary enforcement of local laws, including in relation to exit bans." (NBC)

In Example 1, positive appreciation "visitor-friendly" and "optimized", and verbs "attract" are used to describe the convenience and popularity of China's visa-free policies in CD. However, in NBC, "wrongful" and "arbitrary" are given a negative appreciation, indicating the hidden uncertainties of China's visa-free policies with the possibility of "detentions".

4.2. Discussion

From the linguistic level analysis, the discussion between CD and NBC in the frequencies of using appreciation indicates that appreciation is applied most of the time through the analysis of English news from the perspective of attitudinal resources. It is mainly determined by the guiding function of English new from medias like CD and NBC with their own powerful influence and authority in China and the U.S. respectively.

As the only national English-language newspaper in China, CD is committed to helping the world know the voice of China (Net. 2). Furthermore, CD provides services towards readers around the world so that it has a relatively high influence, which acts as a channel and platform connecting China and the world.

Therefore, it is important and necessary for CD to construct more comprehensive and relatively positive images of China towards the world, so the appreciation with guiding function is used to speak out of China's voice and explain China's visa-free polices and other opening-up measures better.

In comparison, as one of the major American television networks, NBC plays an important role in report on American current culture and values as the same time influence and shape the views of Americans (Net. 3). In this case, NBC represents a tendency of China Travel in America after China's visa-free policies.

However, in this case, NBC emphasizes more the reason why China expands openness through tourism measures is the need for domestic economic recovery after the pandemic isolation, instead of reporting its significance and staring point that contributes to the global economic development in CD.

From the social level perspective, the research finds that CD represents and expresses thoroughly positive attitude towards China and China's visa-free policies.

Through reporting the convenience and benefits of China's measures on openness including visa-free policy toward most countries in the world, the identities of China have been reestablished as a responsible country who has accelerated unilateral opening-up, contributes to the building of an open economy, and promotes high-quality development both domestically and globally.

In comparison, though the reportage of NBC on China's opening-up policies admits the facts of the convenience and popularity of China's visa-free policies among Americans, its exploration expresses mixed attitude.

This reportage is added with the advisory and warns of possible detention if foreigners especially Americans travel in China, which also indicates possibly hidden danger of restrictions when travelling in China towards Americans. Furthermore, tense relationship between China and American is also mentioned a lot in this reportage, which reflects the relatively hostile and unsafe identity with restrictions toward American travelers against China.

5. Conclusion

This research conducted a three-level CDA of reportage on "China's Visa-free Policies" by CD and NBC, which consists of appraisal analysis through classifying and analyzing attitudinal resources of both reports with a discourse practice analysis and social practice analysis of identities represented in the two media sources.

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