Research Proposal of a Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis of British and American Mainstream Media on "The Belt and Road Initiative"

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Abstract

"The Belt and Road Initiative" is a new form of international cooperation proposed by China in the new world situation and pattern. This paper intends to build a corpus based on the news reports of "The Belt and Road Initiative" by British and American mainstream media as a research platform, and analyze the attitudes of the two countries based on the research methods of corpus linguistics and the theory of critical discourse analysis, so as to dig out the hidden political intention behind it.

Keywords

The Belt, Road, Initiative

1. Introduction

China Daily reported, "Chairman Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013. The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road initiative aims to create a trade and infrastructure network connecting Asia with Europe and Africa along ancient trade routes" (2018).

The Cambridge Dictionary (2021) definition of mainstream media is "Mainstream media forms of the media, especially traditional forms such as newspapers, television, and radio rather than the internet that influence large numbers of people and are likely to represent generally accepted beliefs and opinions" (2021).

Mainstream media refer to the media with strong strength, facing the mainstream audience, can lead public opinion and generate strong social in-

fluence. The mainstream media recognized by the public are four major news agencies: Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Agence France Press (AFP), Reuters Ltd. (Reuter). And the newspapers are Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, Times, Financial Times, News of the World, etc.

For a long time, the west has maintained a dominant position in discursive power through the media, and China always seems to be in a weak position in the international communication pattern. This paper studies the dissemination and reception of "the Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI), a political term with Chinese characteristics, in mainstream media in Britain and the United States. It aims to the purpose to publicize "The Belt and Road Initiative" in various ways and promote the rational and objective understanding of China's promotion and development of the Belt and Road Initiative in the west country.

This study will answer the following three questions: 1) What are the trends and characteristics of the English translation of "The Belt and Road Initiative" in mainstream media and news reports in the UK and the US? 2) What is the attitude of the mainstream media in the United Kingdom and the United States towards the "The Belt and Road Initiative"? 3) How do the mainstream media in the UK and the US understand the meaning of "The Belt and Road Initiative"?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Demonstration of Media Coverage

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that "Switzerland's participation in the 'Belt and Road' initiative has an extraordinary impact. Switzerland is known as a political 'neutral country' internationally, and at the same time is a gathering place for the headquarters of international organizations, and has the most prestigious financial services industry in the world. At the same time, for the economy, China's 'One Belt One Road Initiative' will bring many benefits to Switzerland" (2019, 4).

The Global Times reported that in 2019, the "Belt and Road" initiative will spread to the world a new picture of win-win cooperation. As of November 2019, the Chinese government has signed 197 intergovernmental cooperation agreements with 137 countries and 30 international organizations (2019).

CNN reported that "Since its launch, the Chinese government claims up to 150 countries have signed on board, at least in principle. In the first half of 2019, overseas loans as part of the project have already totaled more than $90 billion" (Westcott & Fang, 2019).

2.2. Literature Description

Corpus linguistics is "the study of language based on examples of real life language use" (McEnery & Wilson, 1997: p. 1). Newmark (1991) points out, "abstract concepts or terminology are at the heart of political discourse, involving

culture, values, and historical conditions."

Hardt-Mautner and Stubbs proposed the idea of using corpus methods for critical discourse analysis to enhance the authenticity and objectivity.

"Corpus-based discourse research has two advantages: First, the corpus is used as a database to accommodate a large number of utterances. It is found that linguistic facts and discourse features can be more widely used. Secondly, corpus analysis methods have relatively mature language feature extraction and statistical methods, which can help to find and answer the problems and differences between discourse phenomena" (Liang, Li, & Xu, 2010: p. 213). "Corpus analysis needs to take into account the fact that word meanings change and that they can have different connotations for different people" (Baker, 2006: p. 20). For instance, Kim (2014) explores "the political discourse construction of the Korean mainstream image through the corpus analysis of collocation and index lines, and finds that the US media often shapes North Korea into a country that threatens the security of the international community." Biber (1998) mentioned, "Association patterns represent quantitative relations, measuring the extent to which features and variants are associated with contextual factors. However functional (qualitative) interpretation is also an essential step in any corpus-based analysis." Baker (2006: pp 10-14) concluded that corpus-based quantitative analysis can reduce the subjective bias of researchers and find incremental effect of discourse, which is to find common discourse through a large number of texts. Xu Jiajin pointed out that most of the current corpus discourse studies still focus on vocabulary phrases. This research method of using vocabulary observation discourse has also produced a unique corpus discourse study (Xu, 2019: p. 38).

"Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts." Van Dijk (1998) an important point of critical discourse analysis is the interpretation of language from the perspective of social practice. "It sees language as a social act, focusing on social and political, social change, abuse of power, imposing ideology, and inequities in society" (Bhatia, 2008). The news media has attracted the attention of scholars at home and abroad because of its ability to dominate public opinion and manipulate the characteristics of people's ideology. "Some scholars use the principle of critical discourse analysis to explore the rights factors and ideologies behind them" (Baker, 2008).

3. Research Design

3.1. Preparation for Research

Firstly, research corpus: The LexisNexis news database contains more than 2500 newspapers, more than 1000 journals, more than 300 web blogs and more in the past 25 years, and all news is updated the day after its release. This paper intends

to use newspapers and periodicals from the LexisNexis from September 2013 to December 2020 as corpus to build a corpus for analysis.

US newspapers include: The New York Times, Newsweek, The Economist, USA Today, Investor Business Daily, The Washington Post, The New York Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Times, The New York Post, The Christian Science Monitor, The Hollywood Reporter, and the British newspapers: The Financial Times, The Times, The Guardian, The Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, Daily Mirror, New Politicians, The Sun, Metropolis Daily, New Scientist, Prospect Magazine, International Screen, Evening News, Independence Newspaper, Lawyer, Western Post, Infrastructure Investor. Search the following keywords by LexisNexis: One Belt and One Road Initiative, BRI, B&I, The Belt and Road Initiative, Silk Road, One Belt One, Belt and Road, Silk Road Economic Belt road, One Belt, One Road, Maritime Silk Road.

Secondly, build a corpus: 1) Use AntFileConverter to convert the document file to text in txt format. 2) Change the file name with Rename Superb Batch Renamer. 3) Use EncodeAnt to change the encoding of the text to UTF-8. 4) Use PowerGrep to add text to the template to add the beginning of the RAW text to the metadata. 5) Use the TreeTagger for part-of-speech tagging. 6) Use the USAS online English tagger for lexical semantic annotation. 7) Inspected, organized, proofreaded, and proposed to build a corpus.

Thirdly, analysis using corpus analysis tools: The most basic analysis tools in corpus research are: "concordancer", including WordSmith Tools, AntConc, etc. (Xu, 2019) and BFSU PowerConc developed by Beijing Foreign Studies University Corpus Team for "vocabulary" and "index" And "collocation analysis."

3.2. Research Steps and Methods

Mr. Gui Shichun is the pioneer and main founder of contemporary foreign linguistics and applied linguistics in my country, who has extensive academic influence in the fields of corpus linguistics (Liu & Zhang, 2019). Mr. Gui pointed out that "a corpus is a collection of real language materials stored on a computer and corpus linguistics is an important means of collecting data" (Gui, 2010: p. 419). The use of corpus to study language characteristics has become one of the most important applications of corpus. The use of corpus to analyze text has been widely used in discourse analysis. Through corpus analysis, such as word frequency, keywords, index lines, etc., the research is more scientific.

First of all, we use the English translation of the "The Belt and Road Initiative" as a search term to search the corpus of the "Belt and Road" news reports in the mainstream media in the United Kingdom and the United States, extract the English translation of the "Belt and Road" and the mainstream of the United Kingdom and the United States containing the translated name. Media news reports analyze the trend of the English-language translation of the "The Belt and Road Initiative" from September 2013 to December 2018 in mainstream media news reports in the UK and the US. According to the theory of critical discourse analysis, this paper analyzes the high-frequency vocabulary with the English

translation of "Belt and Road" and reveals the attitude of the mainstream media in Britain and the United States towards the "Belt and Road" and the ideology behind it.

Secondly, we extract ten key words from the mainstream media news reports in the UK and the United States, including the theme of "The Belt and Road Initiative". Based on the analysis of these keywords, we will thoroughly study the mainstream media in the UK and the United States to understand the meaning of "The Belt and Road Initiative".

To summarize and analyze a certain number of subject words, we can not only draw a general understanding of the content of the dialogue, but also reveal the social and cultural connotations of its background. Then we have to generate a word frequency table with BFSU PowerConc, and then generate a keyword result interface. "Select the 2 million vocabulary of the Crown and CLOB corpus under the sys file as a reference to obtain the subject vocabulary" (Xu, 2019: p. 64).

Finally, McNeill (1990: p. 22) points out that triangulation or using multiple methods of analysis is now accepted by most researchers. "Using index analysis tools, we can start with words and expand into multi-word phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and even cultural contexts to gain a full interpretation of a phenomenon" (Xu, 2019: p. 62). Analyze with index line. Index line is a retrieval method often used in corpus linguistics research. Index line retrieval can show the context of high-frequency words, and then analyze semantic rhyme and semantic tendency. For using index analysis tools, we can start with words, expand to multi-word phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and even cultural contexts, so as to obtain a full interpretation of a phenomenon.

4. Expected Research Results

1) Trends and characteristics of the English translation of "Belt and Road" in mainstream media news reports in the UK and the US.

The above the frequency analysis of vocabulary shows that these countries have different translations for the "The Belt and Road Initiative" term proposed by China, and their semantic focus is different. Reveal the attitude of the mainstream media in the UK and the United States towards the "Belt and Road" and the ideology behind it (Refer to Table 1).

2) "The Belt and Road Initiative" covers many fields such as finance, trade, transportation and infrastructure construction.

In order to understand the focus of British and American national media on the theme of "The Belt and Road Initiative", this paper will use WordSmith Tools to obtain the first ten theme words from British and American newspapers in a key order (from September 2013 to December 2019).

Through the analysis of the subject words, it can be found that the Western media have different concerns about the "The Belt and Road Initiative" for their respective national interests, economic interests and ideology (Refer to Table 2).

Table 1. Frequency of application of different English translations of "One Belt, One Road".

The English translation of "The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)"	Total	From September 2013 to December 2019		
		Subtotal	United States	United Kingdom
The Belt and Road Initiative				
Silk Road				
One Belt One road				
Belt and Road				
Silk Road Economic Belt				
One Belt, One Road				
Total				

Table 2. Ten subject headings about the "Belt and Road Initiative" in British and American media.

N	Key Words	Freq.	Keyness
1	China		
2	Chinese		
3	road		
4	belt		
5	,,		
6	,,		
7	,,		
8	,,		
9	,,		
10	,,		

3) Index row analysis can provide contextual information for search terms, revealing their collocations, class joins, semantic tendencies, and semantic rhythms. This article uses the corpus retrieval tool WordSmith Tools to extract the "One Belt One Road" index.

According to the analysis, the following results are expected: The vocabulary and phrases of the British and American media's attitude towards "the Belt and Road Initiative" are mostly neutral or negative.

5. Conclusion (According to Previous Foreign Media Reports, It Is Expected to Make Such a Conclusion)

This thesis uses the corpus method, based on the theory of critical discourse analysis, to find that the mainstream media in the United Kingdom and the United States misunderstood and distorted the connotation of the "Belt and

Road" and mistakenly linked the "The Belt and Road Initiative" with hegemony, military threats and nationalist tendencies. The UK is mainly concerned with the financial sector. The United States has mostly deliberately misrepresented China's ambitions to seek to dominate the world and to create a tense atmosphere. This is mainly due to national interests, economic interests and ideology considerations. These are not conducive to the harmonious development of the international community.

The misinterpretations of "the Belt and Road Initiative" by these media not only reflect their negative perceptions of China's development, but also have a negative impact on the perception of "The Belt and Road Initiative" in the Anglo-American society. Therefore, we should use various methods to accurately and comprehensively publicize the "The Belt and Road Initiative" and its connotation, and promote the dissemination and acceptance of China's political discourse in Western countries, so as to promote the western media and the public to form a rational and objective understanding of "The Belt and Road Initiative".

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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