A Critical Discourse Analysis of Hindustan Times' Reports on Chinese Women

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Abstract: The study on how Chinese women are portrayed in the mainstream English media of India holds significant practical importance for understanding international opinion formation. This study applies Fairclough's three-dimensional model to critically analyze the Hindustan Times' reports on Chinese women in terms of three dimensions: text, discourse practice and social practice. It is found that the newspaper presents a positive image of Chinese women to a certain extent, but most of the images are negative; Sino-Indian relations, the international situation, and gender stereotypes are the deep-seated factors implicitly behind the negative images. The real life and actual image of Chinese women have not been accurately presented. While promoting gender equality, it is necessary to create an international environment conducive to women's development, enhance Chinese women's engagement with the global community, endeavor to tell a good story about Chinese women, and depict diverse and positive roles they play. This approach will enable a better understanding of Chinese women worldwide.

1. Introduction

Chinese women's image is an important part of China's national image. Today, with globalization, as China's international influence continues to grow, foreign media are paying more attention to Chinese women. Wu Yuemin compares and analyzes the portrayal of women's image in Chinese and American newspaper news reports [1]; Li Lixin studies the image of Chinese women presented by The New York Times through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research [2]; Li Na analyzes Western media's reports of Chinese women before and after the Women's Day in 2015 by using the corpus and critical discourse analysis[3]; Shui Lin conducted a critical discourse analysis of the German media's reports on Chinese women from 2005 to 2020 [4]. The image of Chinese women presented in the media determines the world's perception of Chinese women, which in turn affects the world's overall perception of China's image. However, there are not many studies on how the mainstream English-language media in India present the image of Chinese women.

Against the background of the Global Women's Summit and the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India, the study of how Indian mainstream English-language media constructs the image of Chinese women is conducive to the creation of a good international media environment for Chinese women. It also contributes to the dissemination of the image of Chinese women from a global perspective and holds great practical significance for the

study of international public opinion construction.

Starting from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, this paper applies Fairclough's three-dimensional model to deconstruct the textual and constructive features of the Hindustan Times on Chinese women, to explore the image of Chinese women it presents, and then to analyze the deep-rooted influences of the society, culture, and ideology that are hidden behind the discourse.

2. Methodology

Critical discourse analysis is a method of language study. It studies discourse from a critical perspective, examining the ideological meaning behind the discourse by analyzing its linguistic features and the socio-historical and cultural context in which it is situated, and then revealing the relationship between language, power and ideology [5].

Fairclough is an important leading scholar in the field of critical discourse analysis, and his dialectical relationship analysis of socio-cultural contexts is recognized by academics as the most systematic and complete discourse analysis theory in the field [6]. He believes that any discourse is a three-dimensional unity composed of text, discourse practice and social practice. In this three-dimensional unity, the text is the product of discourse practice, and the process of discourse practice is the production, dissemination and reception of the text, while the first two are determined by specific social practices [7]. Therefore, any discourse analysis should include three dimensions: text analysis, discourse practice analysis and social practice analysis. On this basis, he proposes a three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis: i.e., depiction, interpretation, and explanation [8].

3. Data

The data for the study was selected from the Hindustan Times, an Indian mainstream English language media. The newspaper, whose history dates back to the Indian independence movement, is one of the top three English-language newspapers in India in terms of total circulation. It is a privately owned, comprehensive daily newspaper with a neutral orientation towards China [9]. Therefore, the image of Chinese women presented by this newspaper is typical.

Taking the Hindustan Times' coverage of Chinese women as the research object, the author searched the LexisNexis database with the keywords "Chinese woman, Chinese women, Chinese girl, Chinese girls, Chinese female" etc. as the keywords to search and obtain the newspaper's reports from September 27, 2015 to December 31, 2022. After the primary data collection was completed, the author read the collected data article by article, and after screening, 54 valid reports were finally collected.

4. Critical Discourse Analysis of Chinese Women's Image

Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the study conducts a critical discourse analysis of 54 selected news reports about Chinese women: at the textual level, describing their linguistic features in terms of attitude and keywords in contexts; at the level of discursive practices, analyzing the intertextuality of the texts in terms of modes of paraphrasing; and at the level of social practice, the ideology reflected in the text is interpreted from the perspective of changing Sino-Indian relations, international situation and gender perspective.

4.1 Textual Practice

4.1.1 Altitude

Table 1. Altitude of Hindustan Times

Altitude	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Number (articles)	14	16	24	54
Percentage (%)	25.93	29.63	44.44	100

Through Python, the study analyzed the sentiment polarity of the 54 selected news articles (table 1), of which 25.93% showed positive attitudes, 29.63% showed neutral attitudes, and 44.44% showed negative attitudes. It can be seen that Hindustan Times' reports on Chinese women are mostly negative, and the image presented is mostly negative, although there are some positive reports, but they cannot truly show the overall appearance of Chinese women.

4.1.2 Keywords in Contexts

Analyzing keywords in contexts through a corpus allows us to study the use of specific words in specific contexts. In this paper, we use the contextual search KWIC function of AntConc 4.2.0 software to analyze the way Hindustan Times phrases its portrayal of Chinese women and the deeper micro-meanings it conveys.

The words "Chinese woman, Chinese women, Chinese girl" are selected as search terms, and among the 97 collocations, 61 have negative associations, accounting for nearly 63%. Through further textual analysis, it is found that in the newspaper's reports, Chinese women mostly appear together with "allege, arrest, detain, espionage, racially abuse, and sexual harassment". The images of Chinese women that we associate with these words are often related to negative situations such as "crime, accusation, detention, espionage, racial discrimination, sexual harassment", etc., which involve Chinese women "being arrested for espionage, smuggling, telecommunication fraud, etc.", "being cheated, harassed or sexually assaulted", "and being discriminated against".

The number and content of these negative associations reflect the newspaper's tendency to stigmatize Chinese women. The image of Chinese women should be inclusive and diverse, and one cannot simply generalize with these negative terms, which are not representative of the overall image of the entire Chinese female population.

4.2 Discourse Practice

In Fairclough's three-dimensional model, text is a product of discourse practice, and the process of discourse practice is concerned with how text is produced, disseminated, and received, in which Fairclough pays particular attention to the intertextuality of text. News reports are selected by the reporters to present news audiences with discourse-constructed worlds by citing different channels and types of information, and news discourses are hybridized with multiple ideologies and power relations. The study analyzes the intertextuality of texts in terms of paraphrasing.

Table 2. The mode of paraphrasing

Paraphrase	Direct quotation	Indirect quotation	Total
Number	196	201	397
Percentage (%)	49.37%	50.63%	100%

The mode of paraphrasing can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of news reports, and direct and indirect quotations are two basic dimensions of paraphrasing, both of which can be influenced by the position and ideology of the producer of the text. The use of direct quotes can make a story appear objective and impartial because it provides concrete and clear evidence to support

someone's factual statements; while reporters often use direct quotes to express their own positions and opinions and impose them indirectly on their readers [10]. This paper will explore both direct and indirect quotations.

Through Python, the study has counted the number of direct and indirect quotations in the selected samples (table 2). Among them, the number of direct quotes is 196 and of indirect quotes is 201, which are almost equal. Fairclough points out that mass media increasingly tend to use indirect quotations, thus blurring the boundaries between the discourse of the paraphrase and the discourse of the paraphrasee and drowning out the voice of the paraphrasee with the voice of the paraphrase [11].

Extract 1: "We had never doubted the Chinese woman during her stay here, **but her arrest has come as a shock for all residents of the society," Mor said.** Residents of Ganga Apartment said Qing and Singh were always **"aloof"**.(Hindustan Times: 2020/09/21. Headline: *Neighbors of arrested Chinese woman say she was 'very aloof'*)

In a report on the arrest of the Chinese woman for espionage, the report first directly quoted the president of the Ganges Residents Association, meaning that the arrest of the Chinese woman for espionage had shocked all the residents of the community. Then it indirectly quotes a neighbor's negative comment about the Chinese woman: "The woman who was arrested is very cold."The direct and indirect quotations are interwoven to portray "a cold and indifferent Chinese female spy" who is deeply hidden.

Extract 2:A recent set of official guidelines and announcements made by government agencies have raised questions on whether **the Chinese woman's reproductive rights are being-or will be-rolled back as the Communist Party of China (CPC) begins to intervene more decisively to increase the country's birth rate**.(Hindustan Times: 2022/08/29. Headline: *China could tighten abortion rights to tackle population crisis*)

In this article, the author writes: "As China's Communist Party begins to make more decisive interventions to boost the country's birth rate, a series of recent official guidelines and announcements by the Chinese government have raised questions about whether Chinese women's reproductive rights are being, or will be, rolled back." Viewing Chinese women as "the state's birthing machine." Later, the article directly quoted a U.S. report comparing abortion rights in the U.S. and China, describing the changes in China's family planning policies and criticizing the Chinese government's policies in terms of women's human rights and the average fertility rate of women. By portraying Chinese women as "state reproductive machines", the report not only negatively portrays Chinese women, but also discredits the Chinese government.

4.3 Social Practice

Deeper elements such as ideology are often implicit in discourse through linguistic means, and their operation is difficult to detect. The role of social practice analysis is to reveal the underlying factors behind the discourse.

4.3.1 Changes in Sino-Indian Relationship

China and India enjoy close relations, and peace and friendship have been the main features of Sino-Indian relationship throughout the history of more than 2,000 years of interaction. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, India became the first non-socialist country to establish diplomatic relations with China. Meng Qinglong summarized, "Although the two countries have different social systems and ideologies, 'the people of India and China are brothers' had been the general character of Sino-Indian relationship until the late 1950s. In 1959, there was unrest in the border, followed by the Dalai Lama's flight to India. In 1962, the Sino-Indian Border War broke out. These events brought the relationship between India and China to a low point. Relations began to

ease in the early 1970s and normalized in the late 1980s. In the more than 30 years since then, there has been little confrontation between the two countries, although there are still differences and discord over the border issue,and foreign policy [12]." However, on June 18, 2017, an army standoff between India and China in China's Donglang region led to a sharp turn in relations between the two countries. The incident triggered tense border clashes and diplomacy, and is considered the lowest point in relations between the two countries since the end of the Border War.

In April 2018, Chinese President held an informal meeting with Indian President Narendra Modi in Wuhan, a meeting that provided a boost for the two countries to come out of the shadows and break the ice. In 2020, Chinese President and the President of India exchanged congratulatory messages on the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China, and both sides expressed their willingness to further strengthen cooperation. Although leaders of the two countries have expressed their desire to take Sino-India relations to a new level and are committed to win-win cooperation, the process has not been as smooth as it could have been, and the relationship between the two countries continues to be characterized by undercurrents.

At the same time, China and India are the world's two largest developing countries, the two largest emerging economies, and the only two countries with populations of more than one billion. The enormous size and global influence of China and India make the relationship of China and India of transcendent bilateral significance, with wide-ranging implications for the region and the world.

In the face of China's continuous rise, the United States as the head of the international conservative forces to produce a certain degree of crisis and anxiety, worried that China's rise will challenge its hegemonic position, the existing international order and vested interests pattern. This is highlighted in the United States in recent years, the implementation of a series of strategic adjustments, from the introduction of the "Asia-Pacific Rebalancing Strategy" to the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" expansion, the United States of America's containment of China's determination and action has been revealed [13]. At the same time, the rise of China has also brought certain challenges and pressure to India. In order to offset China's increasing power advantage and prevent future growth space from being monopolized by China, India has also adopted a hedging strategy combining self-help and seeking other's help [14].

Under the influence of the international situation, there is still a great deal of uncertainty as to whether the Indian side will be able to adhere to the strategic consensus of "not posing a threat to each other, and utilizing each other as an opportunity for development", adhere to the enhancement of mutual trust and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation. There is still a long way to go to ensure that relations between the two countries are on the right track by being partners for mutual achievement rather than rivals for mutual consumption.

4.3.2 Gender perspective

Western feminists believe that human gender has a dual nature, biological and social: biological gender refers to biological differences in the human body, i.e., universal and generally unchangeable biological differences between men and women; while "social gender" is a product of socio-cultural roles on the basis of biological sex. Li Yingtao mentions that "gender" refers to the group characteristics and behaviors of men and women that are formed in society and culture [15]. These group characteristics and behaviors are called masculinity or femininity.

Through analysis, it can be found that the newspaper's images of Chinese women are divided into six categories: Chinese women "arrested for espionage, smuggling, and telecommunication fraud"; Chinese women "who have been cheated, harassed, sexually assaulted, or subjected to gender-based violence with their lives threatened"; and Chinese women "who have had plastic surgery, have been stigmatized in advertisements, and have been bound by the foot-wrapping culture"; Chinese women "under the pressure of family planning policies"; Chinese women who have suffered from

discrimination because of the COVID-19 pandemic; and Chinese women who have achieved great success in their personal fields.

While the reports present a very small number of women who have achieved great success in the personal sphere, the majority of Chinese women are portrayed in a negative light. This choice actually emphasizes the gender roles of women, who are the weaker sex, oppressed and bullied, while ignoring the great role played by women in the public sphere. All these show that Chinese women and their interests are ignored, condemned, degraded or despised by the mass media, and that their real lives and actual images are not accurately presented.

5. Conclusion

Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model as an analytical framework, this paper conducts a critical discourse analysis of the Hindustan Times' reports on Chinese women, and concludes that the newspaper presents a positive image of Chinese women to some extent. However, most of the images of Chinese women are negative, and that Sino-Indian relationship, international situation, and gender stereotypes are the deeper factors hidden behind the negative images. The real life and actual image of Chinese women is not accurately presented.

The Indian news media have been shaping the image of Chinese women through their own discourse strategies, subconsciously influencing the Indian public's perception of Chinese women. While promoting gender equality, we should strengthen the communication of Chinese women's image to the outside world, endeavor to tell Chinese women's stories well, and portray positive and diversified women's characters, so that the world can better understand the real Chinese women. Creating an international environment conducive to women's development and spreading the true stories of Chinese women require great efforts from our government and media.

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