

# A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE NEWS ARTICLES AND REPORTS ABOUT DIAOYU/SENKAKU ISSUES

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## Abstract

The critical discourse analysis (CDA) is now a major tool for analyzing the news articles and reports. This paper uses CDA to analyze the news articles and reports concerning the Diaoyu/Senkaku issues. It aims to help English language teachers using CDA to create and improve the critical language awareness of students, and how discourse results from the social structure and power relations that serves different power groups.

Through the analysis of articles of Diaoyu/ Senkaku issues from Chinese newspaper the *People's Daily* and Japanese newspaper the *Japan Times*, it is clear that these two newspapers, which have two different political backgrounds, share some obvious similarities in terms of formatting. However, the differences are of much more significant as reflected in the construction of the texts and the lexical choices, modality and process types used in expressing the different views.

In English language teaching, using authentic materials, such as newspaper articles and reports, makes the skill of CDA important as a teaching tool as it may help the English language learners to create and improve their language awareness and the ideology embedded in the texts.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Diaoyu/Senkaku Ideology, Language Awareness, China, Japan.

## Introduction

In recent years, news discourse has become one of the main research areas in critical discourse analysis.

Language learning should always be related to real life and society as authentic language learning material helps learners to master language as used

in a real context.. The understanding of the attitude of the writer in relation to a particular text is important as the second language learners may lack the background to interpret the text in its historical context. But before the learners understanding the attitude of the news articles, they have to understand how the writer is technically constructing the text to reflect a certain attitude whether it be political or personal. To use the Diaoyu/Senkaku issues as a case in point, over a period of time the attitudinal stance may shift as the degree of conflict increases.

## **Background**

Diaoyu Islands are a number of islands which are uninhabited. They are located among Mainland China, Taiwan, and the Okinawa Island of Japan in the East China Sea. There are many names to call these islands. In Mainland China, people call them Diaoyu Islands (钓鱼岛). In Taiwan, people call them Diaoyutai Islands (钓鱼台). Japanese call them Senkaku Islands (尖閣諸島). In English, it should be Pinnacle Islands.

The earliest records about Diaoyu Islands in Chinese history can be dated back to 1000 years ago. Diaoyu Islands were belonged to Ryukyu which was a vassal relationship territory of Ming and Qing Dynasty. Many maps published during that period are marked clearly that Diaoyu Islands is a part of China. Because Japan invaded and annexed the Ryukyu Islands, the administrative control and sovereignty of Diaoyu Islands was ambiguous from 1873 to the end of World War II. In 1945, the emperor of Japan announced to unconditionally surrender and accept the Potsdam Proclamation. It means Japan has to return Taiwan province and the islands including Diaoyu Islands which controlled by Taiwan to China. But actually, US government occupied Diaoyu Island in that year. Until 1971, US returned the administrative control of these islands to Japanese (Zhongqi). The dispute of these islands' sovereignty began. Both Chinese government and Taiwanese government claim they have the ownership of these islands. Also in 1972, the diplomatic ties have been established between China and Japan. Diaoyu Islands issue had been shelved (Tao). In the following years until now, various events about scrambling Diaoyu Islands happened among Japan, China, and Taiwan.

In this paper the researcher is mainly focusing on how China and Japan main newspapers discussed the same issue and the different stances taken on events triggered by the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute?

## Method

The source of the data was from *People's Daily* of China and *The Japan Times* of Japan. In total there were 14 texts from *People's Daily* and 14 texts may collect from *The Japan Times*.

In the original Fairclough's (1995) Three Dimensional Framework was the main method of analysis. The texts were analyzed separately by the classification of events. For example, the texts concerning Japanese government desiring to purchase Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands was analyzed and a comparison made of the reactions reflected in the Chinese and Japanese texts. 7 elements were included in the analysis: reported speech, direct speech, modality, positive and negative words, legalistic words, emotional words, intertextual elements, and factual/referential information. In the part of reported speech, there were also sub-elements as paraphrase, heteroglossia, and statement words. However, in this article only a summary of the major findings can be made.

## Analysis and Discussion

The biggest difference reflected in the various media reporting was the reaction from various public events or demonstrations. The following are some examples:

Reports in early in the dispute were mainly about the Hong Kong activists going to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and Japan's seizure of 15 activists. Later accounts were about Chinese activists' protest marches before the Japanese embassy in Beijing. Later in the same year the Japanese ambassador Niwa's car was attacked. A major event reported was Japan's 'nationalization' of Diaoyu islands with the consequent increase in tension over several months.

*What Conclusions could be drawn from using CDA in this context?*

(1) Both the *People's Daily* and the *Japan Times* seem to spend considerable effort in news gathering an editing rather than reprinting articles from other sources such as agencies.. However, the *People's Daily* usually cited news and information from government and social organizations. On the other hand, the *Japan Times* mainly focused on interviews and quotations of government officers, politicians and other individuals with the relevant expertise on the Diaoyu/Senkaku issues. This difference between these two mainstream newspapers reflects the differences of cultures. Chinese culture, has a strong tendency for collectivism. In

comparison, Japan has developed a strong commercial culture, especially after the American occupation of World War II. With the development of economic booming and development, a culture of mobility and profit has been on the increase. Chinese media, is owned and organized by the state, the purpose of which is to publish and promote the policies and acts of the government as well as the Party. It focuses on the report and propaganda of government-published documents. In contrast, media owned by private investors such as in Japan and may be more inclined to be influenced by market forces.

(2) The attitude of news articles and reports of China newspapers is inclined to support Beijing, the political center of China as expected. While the Diaoyu/Senkaku issues were reflecting the globalization of such issues.

The People's Daily, the center of which is located in Beijing, have rich government resources consequently it is possible for the People's Daily to gain access to the information from the authority in a very short time in order to release government propaganda. That is to say, the place where a news article is published determines which country the news resource is from, therefore the ideology of the resource country will, leave its imprint in that news article. This applies to both Chinese and Japanese media. However, the preference of news articles from international journalists stationed in Japan although claiming neutrality was often contradicting such a claim.

(3) From the perspective of reporting theme, *People Daily* mainly focused on the content of public demonstration while Japanese news articles and reports laid emphasis on descriptions of actions taken by both sides. The *People's Daily* laid particular stress on the Chinese voice and perspective so that the readers did get a full understanding of the Japanese perspective without access to other sources of news and information. Interestingly, the *New York Times* was comparatively balanced in its various accounts articles from journalists stationed in both countries, although uneven in quantity.

The main theme of the *People's Daily* is about speech while that of Japanese news articles is about actions. Speaking of the effects and influence of communication, action was concrete, objective, easy to observe while speech is often comparatively subjective and easy to deviate from facts. The news articles on the *People's Daily* argued the Diaoyu/Senkaku issues through analysis of five dimensions, which are time, location, people, facts and reasons while the Japanese media mainly focus on the reports of action.

(4) A large amount of critic articles have been published on the People's Daily in order to defend Chinese government while articles from

Japanese and American newspapers reflected into the benefit factors behind the Diaoyu/Senkaku issues. The *People's Daily* articles declared the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China regarding to the Diaoyu/Senkaku issues through citation of a variety of evidence from literature and documents in history, geography and legal principles. What is more, the *People's Daily* took a forceful approach of condemning Japanese government of 'stealing' the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island in the name of 'buying' the islands. It was clear that the *People's Daily* was trying to take initiative in this dispute by strengthening China's claims.

In comparison, news articles and reports from Japanese newspapers showed quite a different approach in descriptions and analysis of the Diaoyu/Senkaku issues. The negative attitude of the media showed that the framework of the Cold War was still deeply incorporated in its ideology. Japanese news articles and reports pictured the Chinese government as 'conspiracy theorist' by saying that Chinese government was agitating nationalist sentiment in order to shift public attention away from the impending general election in China and avoid criticizing of the Party.

These conclusions have made it clear that the narrative applied by media is influenced by ideology of local government, although other elements may also intervene. Language is a cultural construction. Despite of the 'wording' in an article, language itself is inevitably influenced by human culture. In human society, language has always been one of the most crucial steps of socialization and therefore cannot be neutral, but a product of local culture and politics. CDA as a language tool can shed some light in the reading of news articles and reports and thus influence the reader to reflect on how the message is being constructed. This will help the reader to read between the lines and beyond the lines by analyzing the construction of the text in the context of situation and culture as reflected in the discourse and thus be able to produce a more informed opinion.

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