

# **A Critical Discourse Analysis on News Report about Controlling Methods in Vaccine of Covid-19 from British and American Mainstream Media based on Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model**

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**Abstract:** *This paper tends to analyze the controlling methods in vaccine of covid-19 in 50 pieces of news report from British and American mainstream media based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model and aims to figure out the way to reinforce the reliability of reports, the message conveyed, the media's attitudes in different epidemic conditions and the effect of the media on society.*

**Keywords:** *Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, News Reports from Media, Controlling Methods in Vaccine of Covid-19*

## **1. Introduction**

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, national governments have been striving for preventing people from infection so as to address the growing social conflict. Among these controls, vaccination is one of the most crucial measures [1]. To some degree, mass media especially newspapers can be used by public officials to facilitate the implementation of controls.

Based on Fairclough's three dimensional model, this study is a critical discourse analysis of the selected news reports from the western mainstream media in order to reveal the effects of the media on the society.

## **2. Critical discourse analysis and Fairclough three dimensional model**

Critical Discourse Analysis, a new branch of modern linguistic research, aims to study the social issues in an interdisciplinary way [2]. Fowler and Kress first proposed this theory to reveal the relations of discourse, power and ideology by critically analyzing the forms of discourse.

So far, it is generally accepted that there are several representatives representing different schools of thought--Norman Fairclough, Van Dijk, Wodak, Wetherell, Kress, Van Leeuwen, etc. Among the approaches mainly adopted by Chinese scholar of Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough's three dimensional model is most systematic, complete and widely used for it is derived from systematic functional linguistics and sociological theory for reference in building analytical framework.

According to Fairclough, discourse is a unity composed of three dimensions: text, discourse practice and social practice. At the textual level, it can be analyzed from the transitivity, modal verbs, nominalization, and even the reporting verbs mentioned by Fairclough. At the level of discourse practice, we can analyze the process of discourse generation, dissemination and acceptance in news reports from the perspective of Fairclough's discourse generation, dissemination and acceptance [3]. At the social and cultural practice level, the analysis can be conducted of media identity and economic and political background.

## **3. Study process**

The statistics of this paper are from the New York Time, The Washington Post, Cable News Network, Turner Network Television, *The Times*, *Financial Times*, the Guardian. 55 pieces of news

reports have been collected through AntConc, with 21 from American media and 34 from British media. All texts are primary sources without any changes and deletions. Main functions of AntConc are concordance, keyword list and word list in the period of data statistics and analysis, which promise the data objectivity and reduce error.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

##### 4.1. Direct quote & effects; indirect quote & effects

Reporting verbs such as add, ask, say, report, tell, for instance, “she/he gave a statement that...” are categorized into formal one, whereas verbs like admit, claim, assert, allege belong to the expansion. The Table 1, with a focus on past-tense reporting words, shows two different kinds of reporting verbs: direct quotations and indirect quotations respective in American media and British media so that the intentions of reporters and the features of news report can be more clearly analyzed.

Table 1: The distributions of two types of reporting verbs

Direct quotations	Raw frequency		Indirect quotations	Raw frequency	
	American media	British media		American media	British media
add	5	10	add	4	11
ask	1	0	ask	3	0
report	0	1	report	1	12
say	65	162	say	70	175
tell	9	19	ask	10	11

The voices of these reporting verbs are mostly from presidents, relevant organizations or representatives, health experts or authorities and partly some citizens or the event participates. As noted, said is the most frequent word and all the other verbs do not appear as frequently in direct and indirect quotations. John Flowerdew and Maurizio Gotti (2014) pointed out that “Adding an external voice to one’s own argumentation holds strong implications of affiliation and solidarity or, conversely, dissent and opposition with both voice and/or the reported message.”

##### 4.2. Over-classification: adjectives described the vaccination

Adjectives are considered a common example of over-classification. Adjectives the media used, intentionally or not, help guide the public opinion and its fermentation. The general usage of adjectives employed to describe vaccination in news reports is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Adjectives describing vaccination

Adjectives Text	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Sample 1	easier	-	limited
Sample 5	hopeful; sufficient	dominant	blunt; limited; without enough; unprotected
Sample 18	-	consequential	slow; inadequate; vulnerable; bad; dire; dubious; vulnerable
Sample 23	sensible; trusted	-	absurd; difficult; tired; vulnerable; belittling; pointless
Sample 51	successful; best; pleased	mandatory; unnecessary	sinister; wrong; worrying; unfair
Sample 55	-	similar	fatal; serious; sluggish; perplexed; embittered
Sample 9	-	crucial	unclear
Sample 13	powerful; speedy	susceptible	formidable; loose; worrisome; slipping; ominous; complex
Sample 34	aspirational; effective welcome;	-	cautious; vulnerable
Sample 42	vital	-	sluggish; chaotic

### **4.3. Modality: the frequency of modal verbs**

As noted, positive modal verbs account for a large part of the news samples, among which “will” is the most frequently used. For instance, the outlook is improving as vaccines are rolled out. If vaccines become outdated, they will be updated. “Will” expresses the probability of optimizing the vaccine so that children can be vaccinated. Modal verbs are used to express possibilities, making readers more willing to accept the information, and provide hope that people can share emotions and work together for these goals. It also holds with “should” and “could”. However, “may” indicates low probability and can be used to explain the uncertainty. This kind of concept with suggestive or potential meaning reflects subjectivity to a great extent. On the contrary, the word “must” is not easily used by the media for modal words of obligations can be very incentive.

On the other hand, negative modal verbs are rarely used in English and American reports. Consider this example. Federal officials want it to submit more data showing the switch would not compromise vaccine quality. “Would not” suggests a very positive attitude. Two factors affect the frequency of its use. First, during the pandemic, the authority should take the role of pacifying the public. Second, in order to avoid unclear information or dissatisfaction with the ineffectiveness of the measures, the use of such words will also be reduced.

### **4.4. Interpretation stage**

#### **4.4.1 News source: specified, semi-specified and unspecified sources**

Specified source clearly shown in the report, refers to some specific and detailed information like name, identity, position, etc. which is showed clearly in the report. Semi-specified source is not written in detail but in an implicit reference, such as the name of an organization. “It is said that...” is used to indicated unspecified source.

#### **4.4.2 Modes of discourse representation: direct discourse, indirect discourse and preset direct discourse**

In news reports, direct discourse can best convey the feelings of the speaker, and enhance the authenticity of news reports. This statement directly expresses the lack of medical service system and the worry. Indirect quotation is an indirect description things. At this time, the media will often utilize emotional intervention, to show their attitude. Consider the following illustration. The use of indirect discourse mixed the voice of the media with that of Kay Keane, the manager of the surgical clinic. The media supplemented his words and expressed the dissatisfaction of the media with the chaos of vaccine logistics, indicating criticism and trying to call for some countermeasures. It is worth mentioning that presupposed direct discourse is often associated with indirect discourse. Here, the media depends on the meaning of context and presupposes that the public has already understood the vaccine. Therefore, in news reports, the media will integrate three ways of expression, and on the basis of describing the facts, increase their views, views and attitudes, so as to enhance the authenticity and readability of the report.

### **4.5. Explanation stage**

#### **4.5.1 Situational context: reference to the headline**

The media is the main body providing social information on the control of Covid-19, informing people of this sudden major disease, the impact on their lives, various preventive measures, vaccination etc.

Headlines are an important embodiment of situational context, like the title of sample 8, “people of color are represented in us vaccine trials, study fins”, not only reflects the lack of vaccines, but also further reflects the prevalence of American hegemonism, implying that the United States has strong racial discrimination, which is determined by historical memory, class estrangement and national consciousness, and is also reflected in vaccination to a great extent. What's more, there is no title that mentions racial discrimination in British media reports, indicating that racial discrimination in Britain is less serious than in the United States.

#### **4.5.2 Institutional context: background information**

CNN, Cable News Network, founded in June 1980, is considered to be the first 24-hour news channel, offering a round-the-clock news program via satellite to cable television networks and satellite

television subscribers. The New York Times is a daily newspaper published in New York with a good credibility and authority for a long time. The Wall Street Journal is a comprehensive newspaper featuring financial reporting, focusing on the financial and business fields. With a wide international influence and a daily circulation of 2 million, the reports are mainly serious with few illustrations.

The Times, adhering to the independence and objectivity, is a comprehensive national daily newspaper of the United Kingdom with great influence on politics, economy and culture all over the world. The Financial Times, is a leading global financial newspaper with more than 1.6 million readers in four print editions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and Asia. The Guardian, as well as The Times and The Daily Telegraph, is known as one of Britain's "big three" and good at commentary and feature articles. Its political views are generally considered center-left and its main readers include politicians, white-collar workers and intellectuals.

#### **4.5.3 Social context**

Facing Covid-19, not only the US government but also the UK government released new information to the public through the media and informed the public of the latest vaccine news, which played a good role in stabilizing the society and enhancing public confidence. In addition, the media has played a role in persuasion, informing the public of timely vaccination and how many doses are needed to effectively prevent the virus. The media have served the government and effectively enhanced its credibility and authority. On the whole, it has exerted a positive influence. However, the media sometimes are biased, and are against the public's interests. They choose the information sources preferred by the government.

## **5. Conclusion**

Through this study, we can conclude that the media strive to convey authenticity, hopefulness and proactive attitude. Since specific sources, direct discourses are used quite a lot, it is believed that the media aim to improve the credibility of the news, and thereby indicate relevant social problems, showing a more optimistic attitude and tending to provide a more effective solution.

The study is not without flaws. The number of samples is rather limited. Besides, on account of the limited space, only few examples of samples are shown which may lead to incomplete information and inadequate illustrations. Finally, the further research would be needed to involve more examples and conducted from different perspectives.

## **References**

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