Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1　The research background

1.1.1　The research motivations

We live in a world surrounded with various and complex media. Along with the explosion of the Internet since the mid-1990s，the widespread digital communication technologies provides us，especially the students with a convenient access to the adequate，or even nearly unlimited information，which has empowered students to become self-directed learners. Then comes the question，how could we figure out what information is useful for us and avoid being deceived by the constructed media messages at the same time?

When harmed by the media effects，we may incline to condemn the improper media performance and rarely question our own role in

the mass communication process instead. It is likely to be over-looked, because we participate in the ubiquitous and indispensable mass communication so naturally. Then, what should we do when dealing with the vast media information each day? We have no alternative but to be literate, which requires us to be able to recognize bias as well as misinformation, and to identify disguised facts as well as other distortions in the complicated media world.

To be critically literate is significantly important for us to decode media messages nowadays. As Jeff Share (2009) observes, "the manner in which media cloak their role in reproducing hegemony as merely entertainment or information tends to hamper critical analysis of the inequalities of power in society and our relationships with media". Douglas Kellner (1995) gives an explanation that critical literacy "gives individuals power over their culture … enabling people to create their own meanings, identities, and to shape and transform the material and social conditions of their culture and society".

When we move from reading books in print to reading on a digital reader, the education is also required to keep in pace with the development of digital devices that can be used to obtain, share and discuss information. Schools have been struggling with providing an appropriate teaching method to fit the students who are used to employing technology and social media routinely each day to communicate with others in their lives, keep abreast of what is happening in the world, solve problems that arise, and be creative. Educators have struggled to integrate the changing technology and media into the learning process. Instead of banning the use ofcellphones and other digital tools in class to keep distractions, schools should embrace the technology of digital devices as tools for teaching and learning and

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foster the students to be media literate enough to decode the constructed media messages in the media world. This book intends to apply Critical Discourse Analysis to media literacy teaching, which is a combination of teaching linguistics and media literacy education.

1. 1. 2　The research objectives

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has developed rapidly in the past three decades or so with its quite diverse research topics, such as politics, economy, wars, strikes, gender inequality, racial discrimination, and so on. Among these researches, many are focused on the media discourse. In the early 1970s, under the influence of the theory of ideology, mainly that ofAlthusser and Gramsci, the trend of critical studies on mass media appeared. The so-called transparency and value-free myth of the press has been repeatedly overthrown, and the hidden ideology of the language use in media discourse has drawn people's attention. "Discourses are ideological and there is no arbitrariness of signs" (Wodak, 2001) and "ideology is pervasively present in language" (Fairclough, 1989). Simpson (1993) points out that "as no use of language is considered truly neutral, objective and value-free, then theoretically critical linguistic analysis may be performed on any form of discourse." However, most researches on media discourse from the CDA perspective prefer to investigate the hidden ideology of those so-called "political kind" reports. On the contrary, those news on sports, economy, entertainment, education and science, etc. which seems more "neutral", gains relatively rare attention.

Therefore, this studyaims to (1) elaborate on the importance of being media literate and raise the students'media literacy awareness; (2) integrate CDA with media literacy teaching to foster the

students' media literacy abilities and skills, at the same time to show the feasibility of interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary method in media literacy education; (3) demonstrate the process of deconstructing news messages and serve a supplement to the existing critical studies of media discourse by doing a critical discourse analysis on the news reports concerning "peace, development, cooperation and benefit".

1.2   The significance of the research

The present study embraces the idea of interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary approach to the media literacy education. It also exerts the idea by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis into media literacy teaching and proves the feasibility of it in "reading" media. The research provides us with a critical perspective in decoding media messages and an approach to practicing media literacy teaching within the discipline of Linguistics. It not only helps to raise the students' media literate awareness, but also foster their media literate abilities and skills.

Based on theidea of media literacy education and the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, the present study is meant to be a contribution to as well as an application of CDA in media literacy education not only confined to linguistics. It is intended to deconstruct the news messages in sample reports and show us how China's English media produce reports on economic activities and terror attacks. By analyzing four sample reports from the Xinhuanet, it reveals the hidden relationships between language and ideology in the

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seemingly "neutral" news events. It also examines the language use to see how language is influenced and employed by the reporter's ideology in news discourse and how the ideology comes into being.

Choosing reports concerning "peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit" as its focus, the book offers a supplement to the existing CDA studies of media discourse, and it also attempts to point out that whatever topic it covers, news discourse is, more or less, unavoidably of subjectivity. In other words, no news report is absolutely objective and impartial. Those news reports on seemingly "neutral" events, more or less have carried political or other elements and reflect the certain ideologies of the powerful groups through discourse. Thus it helps to prove and universalize the validity of the claim that news discourse is value-laden and ideologically invested.

Moreover, it hopes that the present study may help the readers and learners not only to be aware of the importance and necessity of media literacy education, but to be able to employ critical thinking to analyze media messages in the complex media world nowadays.

1.3　The research data and methodology

1.3.1　Research data

Nowadays, news media becomes a general means for people to get worldwide information. With escalating economic strength and increasing communication influence, Chinese news media plays a more and more vital role in the world's media market. Sponsored and supported by the Xinhua News Agency, Xinhuanet, which has developed

its own global network and is an all-media information gathering, processing and spreading platform, becomes China's important central news service-oriented website, and one of the most influential news portals in the world. All the news data chosen and used in the study is collected through internet. To be specific, it is from the Xinhuanet, a representative media website in China, which has its prestige and influence worldwide. Internet, to some extent, as a basic and widely used medium to people, is rather convenient for us to get the relevant information swiftly and efficiently from the event. Besides, the online version of the news reports is identical in content to the officially published version.

As to how to define a research project, NormanFairclough (1992) who considers "language as social practice", concludes that "research projects in discourse analysis are … most sensibly defined first in terms of questions about particular forms of social practice, and their relations to social structure…Discourse analysis should best be regarded as a method for conducting research into questions which are defined outside it. " The defining questions of the sample news reports in the study are as follows: (1) What linguistic features and structures are employed by the reporters in the sample reports? (2) What ideologies are the news messages in the sample reports intended to construct? (3) Are they value-free? If not, how are they ideologically reproduced?

1. 3. 2 Research methodology

To media literacy education, the abilities and skills to decode or deconstruct a wide range of media forms and contents are of significant concern. This study will adopt a combination of literature review

and sample analysis to elaborate on the importance and feasibility of media literacy education in teaching and daily life, especially to the students. As it goes through a literature review of media, media literacy and media literacy education, this book puts forward the idea of combining Critical Discourse Analysis with media literacy teaching, that is integrating Discourse Analysis into media literacy teaching. It is intended to employ the CDA to analyze four sample news reports, which are selected from the Xinhuanet with the topics concerning China's Belt and Road initiatives, the 2016 annual conference of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) and the Brussels attack, to set an example of interdisciplinary approach in media literacy teaching.

1.4   The organization of the book

The book is organized in five chapters. The first chapter, the current one, serves as a general introduction. Here, the research background is briefly sketched, the purpose and significance of the research are stated, the data collection and adopted methodology in the research are made clear, and the organization of the whole book is introduced.

Chapter 2 is a literature review of media, media literacy and media literacy education respectively. First, it addresses the notion of media and its various types, then focuses on the studies of news, especially the definition of news and the review of news value and news frame. Secondly, it introduces some definitions, characteristics and skills of media literacy as well as critical thinking, which is considered as one of the four important 21st skills. Thirdly, it defines what

media literacy education is and discusses the purpose and related "key concepts" of media literary education. It also looks at the feasibility of the integration strategies and interdisciplinary approaches in teaching media literacy.

Chapter 3 introduces Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a perspective and an approach into news analysis. According to the relevance to the curret reserch，the studies on news discourse，the definition of CDA，the conception of language，ideology and power，and previous CDA studies abroad and at home are stated selectively，more or less in detail. Then，as the theoretical framework and analytic tools，Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA and Halliday's Functional Grammar are adopted and elaborated.

Chapter 4 briefly explains the data collection and sample selection of the study. Then the critical discourse analysis of the samples is carried out at the textual，discursive and societal levels in this chapter.

Chapter 5 presents with the findings，implications as well as the limitations of the study.