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## Advanced Writing II: Writing Assignment 3

Date: 5 July 2015

### An Analysis of the News Reports under the Three-Dimensional Framework

Fairclough claimed in his research that "any discursive event should be seen as an integration of three levels of practices; the level of pure linguistic form, the production consumption and distribution of the discourse, and the level of socio-cultural practice" (Fairclough 4). In order to melt the three levels as a whole, Fairclough establishes the Three-dimensional Framework which plays an essential part in critical discourse analysis. Here I would like to analyze the news reports of the Kunming railway station terrorist attack collected from five foreign media. It can clearly prove the important function of lexical choice which is the first level of the Three-dimensional Framework.

First of all, I would like to analyze the lexical choice about the subjects of the news. In the description of the Chinese President Xi Jinping, Calum Macleod from USA Today selected "boss Xi" to refer to the President as a leader of a national security committee in his report "Dozens Dead in Knife Attack at China Train Station". Generally speaking, the word "boss" means a person who is in charge of an organization and makes all decisions, which has predominantly subjectively ironic shape in news report. At the same time, the writer used the term "alleged attackers" to define these terrorists. What happened at that time was that five knife-wielding assailants were running towards the police "and trying to hack the police. If these people are "alleged attackers", then what kind of behavior should be judged as crime and how should we judge the dividing line between a criminal and a suspect. However, the author deliberately used the ambiguous and milder lexical terms to address the terrorists. When describing the terrified crowd who were fleeing desperately, the correspondent from BBC chose the word "onlookers" to define the crowded people. An "onlooker" is a person who just stands beside to watch and does not take part in the event. In many occasions, the person to which "onlooker" refers is an indifferent, unconcerned person. Under the most urgent circumstance, everyone was very likely to be hurt or even killed by the terrorists, so how could it be possible for them to stand there and watch the happening of the atrocity? Therefore, the word "onlooker," used in that place was inappropriate. Therefore, to a certain degree the author did not regard the savage act as a terrorist attack but an ordinary violent incident. These three selected words are the most representative lexical choices which reveal the implicit attitudes of the writers towards the terror event.

Secondly, I would like to analyze eight main sentences of these different news reports.

Sentence 1 (From BBC, 2 March 2014) "An attack by knife-wielding men at a railway station in Kunming in south-west China has left at least 29 dead, the state

news agency Xinhua says.<sup>o</sup>

This sentence is a brief introduction of the terrorist attack in Kunming station. The writer used "men" to refer to the group of mobs rather than "terrorists", which would cause an impression for readers that the nature of the event was just a violent incident. Most people prefer to read the front bold words in news report in general, especially when reading news materials which have little connections with themselves. This will also be the case for the choice of the title. The title of the news used by BBC is "US Says Kunming Attack is 'act of terrorism'". As a public service broadcaster BBC establishes under a Royal Charter and operates under its Agreement with the Home Secretary. It means that BBC is the state media of Great British. However it uses "America" commentary as its coverage title, which reveals the political position of British in the world and its relationship with America. In the meanwhile, the US medium put the term "act of terrorism" in quotation marks which showed that the medium was unwilling to acknowledge the Kunming station event as a violent terrorist crime. To some extent, BBC chose this title to indicate that it would hold the same attitude with the US towards the terrorist attack. And there is no doubt readers' attention would be diverted from the event itself to other places.

Sentence 2 (From The Washington Post, 4 March 2014) "China" government-controlled Xinhua News Agency said Monday that the attack was carried out by a terrorist gang of six men and two women.<sup>o</sup>

This sentence is reported by a journalist from The Washington Post. The term "government-controlled" means Xinhua News Agency is the propaganda of Chinese government, and the contents of the coverage is determined by the government. More or less, readers would be affected by this term and tend to believe that this piece of news may be untrue. However, the evidence at the crime scene leaves no doubt that the Kunming railway station attack was nothing other than a violent terrorist crime.

Sentence 3 (From The Washington Post, 3 March 2014) "Police fatally shot four of the assailants-putting the overall death toll at 33 and captured another after the attack late Saturday in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, the state-run Xinhua News Agency said."<sup>o</sup>

Sentence 4 "State broadcaster CCTV said that two of the assailants were women and that one had been slain and the other detained."<sup>o</sup>

Both sentence 3 and sentence 4 are from the same news and introduce that terrorists are shot and arrested by police. In sentence 4 the author uses the verb "slain" which means the terrorist is killed in a violent and brutal way and indicates that the police deliberately and subjectively kills her. In fact, this terrorist was shot to death after repeated warnings. And in sentence 3 the writer concluded that police shot four assailants death and led to the overall death toll at 33. This sentence is prone to give readers the impression that it is the police who results in the increase of death toll and more serious consequences rather than introduces the event that four assailants were

shot to death.

Sentence 5 (From BBC, 4 March 2014) <sup>a</sup> Establishing facts independently is difficult, because foreign journalists' access to the region is restricted.<sup>o</sup>

This sentence is BBC's point about Chinese government information control on domestic violent events. <sup>a</sup> "Difficult" and "restricted" make it easier for readers to understand that the information BBC obtained may not be the fact because of Chinese government's strict and overbearing way of news revealing. And this sentence also illustrates BBC's distrust of Chinese authority, which is entrenched in its ideology.

Sentence 6 (From Reuters, 2 March 2014) <sup>a</sup> The attack comes at a particularly sensitive time, as top officials from China's Communist Party are gathering for their most important public meeting Wednesday, an annual convening of its largely rubber-stamp legislature in Beijing.<sup>o</sup>

The term "rubber-stamp" in politics means routine authorization of a decision without any question. And "rubber-stamp legislature" implies that the meeting is to create the superficial appearance of legislative without careful discussion and rigorous process. Obviously, this term leaves a satire on Chinese Communist Party that China is not a democratic and rule-of-law country.

Sentence 7 (From CNN, 3 March 2014) <sup>a</sup> In social media, some users' attempts to reflect on the root causes- including waves of Han migration into Xinjiang and the treatment of Uyghurs in their native land-to the latest terror were quickly drowned out by the overwhelming sound of fury.<sup>o</sup>

The author adopted a dash to tell readers that the primary cause of this terrorist attack is the ethnic contradiction between Han and Uyghurs rather than the contradiction between Xinjiang separatists and Chinese people. The author intended to distract reader's attention from the attack. Besides this sentence, all the news reports cover the relationship between Han and Uyghur more or less. The reporters all tried to mislead readers and destroy China's image by reporting unproven <sup>a</sup> facts<sup>o</sup> and incorrect views. The following sentence is the best explanation.

Sentence 8 (From Reuters, 4 March 2014) Instead, she (Kadeer) said the assault was more likely <sup>a</sup> the desperate action of those people who lost their hope in the government".

In the sentence 8, the writer provided a comment made by Kadeer who claimed various leadership titles from overseas Uyghur separatist organizations. She regarded the terrorist attack in Kunming station as the desperate action of those terrorists. Apparently, she was attempting to find excuse for the atrocity and to blame Chinese government for initial cause of the event. The correspondent is also trying to borrow Kadeer's words to convey his/her attitude and ideology.

To conclude, these reporters deliberately implant their opinions in the reports to mislead readers to obtain negative knowledge about China. Although it is inevitable to insert more or less personal ideas in news report, it is immoral to

consciously make use of the news to deliberately smear other people or entities.

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