

IJACT 20-12-27

Discourse Analysis of News Articles on the U.S and China Trade War in Korean Press

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Abstract

In the global economy, trade is not confined in geological boundaries, enhancing the international relation among countries. However, the trade tension between the largest economy and the second-largest economy raise concerns among the world economies, enhancing the uncertainties around world. In particular, the trade tension between the two countries is highly related with South Korea's trade balance, because the country is highly dependent on the trade with the two countries. Given this, we analyzed the news editorials published in Korean quality newspaper, with related to U.S. and China Trade War by looking at the ideological perspectives of news outlets or journalists to the issue within the framework of critical discourse analysis. In particular we gave a special attention to the attitude to each country in order to investigate their ideological stance to the country, following van Dijk (1998)' ideological square. The results are as follows: first, the Chosun Ilbo emphasized 'their' bad properties directly and aggressively, while the Hankyoreh designated the U.S. as a member of an out-group, thus mitigating 'our' bad qualities; Second, the two strategies of emphasis and mitigation enabled both newspapers to reinforce in-group homogeneity and out-group exclusion. Thus, we could conclude that the editorial is a clear indicator to show the news outlet's ideological stance to each country in regard to the trade issue.

Keywords: Trade war between the U.S. and China, South Korea, Ideological Square, Critical Discourse Analysis.

1. Introduction

In the global economy, trade is not confined in geological boundaries, enhancing the international relation among countries. However, the trade tension between the largest economy and the second-largest economy raise concerns among the world economies, enhancing the uncertainties around world. In particular, the trade tension between the two countries is highly related with South Korea's trade balance, because the country is

highly dependent on the trade with the two countries. China and the United States have been in a trade war, slapping high tariffs on goods crossing the borders between the two countries. The war started with U.S. President Donald Trump's declaration for fair trade. However, this is not just an issue limited to these two countries because they are our major trader partners. It means the tension between the two countries have effects on our export and import volumes. This is why we are sensitive to the relation between the countries. Amid this backdrop, this paper analyzes news stories published in Korean quality newspapers, the Chosun Ilbo and the Hankyoreh with regard to U.S. and China Trade War in that they are major trade partners to our country, which has a detrimental factor for trade balance. In particular, we focused on the news outlets' attentions to the trade issue in that news stories or news outlets' attitude to a certain issue has created public opinion by employing van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) [1]. Ideology has taken center in the literature of media discourse analysis. Media outlets form and determine people's norms and beliefs according to the social, political interests dominating the country [2]. In the process, media function to mobilize and persuade the public to support the social interest of the elite. Societies' dominant ideology naturally becomes social criteria for the judgment of certain issues. Ideology can be defined in many ways.

2. Theoretical Consideration

Newspapers reflect the ideological positions of powerful people and organism. Typically, ideology represents a mental framework including languages, concepts, categories, thought, and the system of representation. But in a narrow scope, it also represents people's or groups' political preferences, by which social ideologies are formed. This would be partly evidence to support the presumption that media discourse delivers more than just a set of facts. Journalists' lexical choices also give priorities to the social position of power, to the extent that Van Dijk (1998) claims that the ideologies that are most prominent in the media are largely those of elites (p. 180) [3].

Analyzing editorials has great significance in that a demarcation for the ideological boundaries is much clearer than any other types of media discourse- for example, than news articles. It is true that there are quite a few studies on newspaper editorials, in comparison with news articles. However, according to Haney and Tator (2002), editorials are the expressions of the broader ideological stance of newspaper's owners and managers (p.93) [4]. For example, editorials tend to show a media bias toward a certain issue than straight news, even though both types of media discourse are devoid of neutrality. This is in line with van Dijk's (2006) proposal that the contents of editorial reflect predominant ideological assumptions in a society (p. 13) [5]. Bell (1991) claimed that editorials represent the newspaper's official statement on a certain issue [6]. Even Richardson (2007) gave a warning that the language of the news media need to be taken very seriously van Dijk (1989) pointed out that the editorials genre necessarily requires the summarizing or recapitulating of events, but this summarizing, selection, and focusing presuppose ideologically framed opinions (p. 235) [7]. In particular, since the primary function of editorials is to set up the ways for communication with news consumers, we can easily find some polarized words or expressions in describing political actors and event, and specific rhetoric structure such as overstatement [8].

In this analysis, media discourse in editorials is the basis for the investigation of social, political, or cultural practices in the discourse because media discourse shows the interconnection between social practices and language in a clear way, as language cannot be interpreted and decontextualized from the real world. Given this, the central aim of this paper is to identify how discourse linguistic features are used to distinguish in-group from out-group in terms of ideology. So, the van Dijk's model is crucial in this study, although other works from Fowler (1991) and Fairclough (2001) are partly incorporated for the analysis. This model shows how the particular ideology is revealed through two strategies of our (or us) versus their (or them) [9, 10]. It polarizes in-groups and out-groups through two strategies of emphasis and mitigation.

China and the United States have been in a trade war, slapping high tariffs on goods crossing the borders between the two countries. The war started with U.S. President Donald Trump's declaration for fair trade. However, this is not just an issue limited to these two countries because they are our major trader partners. It means the tension between the two countries have effects on our export and import volumes. This is why we are sensitive to the relation between the countries.

3. Method and Data

Among many Korean newspapers, the Chosun Ilbo and the Hankyoreh are selected because both clearly show their ideological stances and are among the largest media outlets in Korea. We analyzed 66 editorials—28 (18130 words) from the Chosun Ilbo and 38 (18677 words) from the Hankyoreh for the three years until 2019. All the data were sorted by relevance. All the editorials were searched with the following two terms: trade war, the U.S. and China. All the editorials were archived through the search engine software, which is one of the best research service engines in Korea. Note that only editorials were used as the analysis samples. For example, all the others such as columns, opinions, and the letters to the editor, writing on blogs and twitters were excluded because they rely heavily on the perspectives or ideologies from the public, in comparison with editorials. So, since this study solely focuses on the newspapers' or the media outlets' ideologies, the editorials written by the editorial board were only used for the analysis.

4. Finding and Analysis

Lexicon represents a speaker's and a writer's attitude to an entity. In particular, titles and subtitles are of great importance in that they draw attentions from news consumers. In this sense, we need to pay attention to news titles.

- (1) Global Trade War on top of Nuclear Issue, Making Thing Worse (March 2, 2018)
South Korea has not resolved a nuclear issue. In this situation, the trade war between two economies has raised global uncertainties....
- (2) South Korea has no clear position toward the Trade War between the U.S. and China. No Strategy Again? (March 23, 2019)
South Korea seemed to have no strategies toward the trade issue. There could be no satisfactory decision in regard to the tension between the two countries....

The above gives a warning to the government by stating that the government has a mandate to do something to resolve the tension between the two countries.

On the contrary, the Hankyoreh portrays the controversial issue in a different way, designating The U.S. President as its outgroup member.

- (3) Finally, the US President started “the Global Trade War” (March 4, 2018)
He is relentless. He is not humble. Finally, the U.S. president set fire under the name of “trade war.” This will spike uncertainties around the world....
- (4) Donald Trump's troubling trade War, Please He seems to have no common sense (March 9, 2019)
Donald Trump flip-flopped his idea and opinion. Even his advocates claim that he needs to find his cause and reason for the U.S interests....

This stance is in line with major U.S. newspaper as follows:

- (5) How Trump's Trade War Went from Method to Madness (May 6, 2018, Bloomberg)
Trump's Trade War Was Futile. The president's clash with Beijing accomplished little and bodes ill for the growing conservative movement to the trade war.
- (6) In the past, the argument for taking the fight to China was that the United States economy was strong enough to withstand a trade war.

As shown above, major U.S. newspapers said that the war would be fruitless and had no national interest. In particular, they have warned that it could unsettle financial markets. The following news titles used the same strategies to highlight Donald Trump's bad properties.

- (7) President Trump's Fruitless War (October 19, 2019, NY Times)
President Trump told the American people that confronting China would be quick and painless and would result in clear gains for the American economy, a philosophy summarized most famously in his Twitter boast: "Trade wars are good, and easy to win."
- (8) How Trump's Trade War Went From Method to Madness (November 14, 2019, Bloomberg)
There's little doubt the fight will have a place in history, says Douglas Irwin, an economic historian at Dartmouth: No American president in the past century has waged an economic war on this scale. But while Trump created an opportunity, he risks squandering it as well. "Are we going to look back and say, 'This was all a failure'? I don't think so," says Wendy Cutler, a former U.S. trade negotiator who leads the Asia Society Policy Institute. "But if we end up comparing what they're able to accomplish vs. their initial objectives, I think the accomplishments are going to fall way short. And they won't be the first administration to do that. But wow, they certainly raised the stakes and certainly allowed U.S. interests to suffer through the tariffs in this effort."

The above mentioned show ideological differences among newspapers on a linguistic feature basis. The lexicons such as *fruitless* as in (7) and *madness* as in (8) designate the U.S. president as a bad man because he invoked an unnecessary war to give no national interests to his country and his strategy went wrong. The divergent ideological representations can be integrated into van Dijk's (1998) ideological square. As mentioned above, his model illustrates the effective strategies for positive in-group and negative out-group formations. That is, the setting frames him as a member of their out group, highlighting their bad behaviors. In particular, we found the followings: (i) the Chosun Ilbo emphasized and highlighted '*their*' bad properties more frequently and aggressively than the Hankyoreh, while the Hankyoreh tended to portray events and actors in a more moderate way than its counterpart, though emphasizing '*their*' bad qualities, designating Donald Trump as an outsider. However, neither the editorials emphasizing either their good properties, nor mitigating their good properties was also found in both newspapers. In addition, the strategies enabled the newspapers to increase in-group solidarity and out-group exclusion [11].

5. Conclusion

This research focuses on analyzing news stories published in Korean quality newspapers with regard to U.S. and China Trade War. China and the United States have been in a trade war, slapping high tariffs on goods crossing the borders between the two countries. The war started with U.S. President Donald Trump's declaration for fair trade. In particular, we need to pay a special attention to the relation between the two countries because they are our major trading partners. This means that our economy is heavily dependent on the exports to the countries. For example, we can record a current account surplus when we export more goods to the countries. In this tension around the world, in order to investigate whether newspapers or news outlets deliver fair news stories to news consumers, and further to know whether news outlets deliver their ideological stance to the issue, we have looked at editorials from major Korean newspapers. As a results, we find that the Chosun Ilbo clearly and directly show their position or stances to the government, employing this issue as a guide to judge the government, blaming the government of their no strategies, whereas the Hankyoreh blames the U.S. President for his relentless and selfish egoism. In other words, the former emphasized "their" bad qualities directly, while the latter mitigated "our" bad qualities, criticizing the U.S. President for its bad personalities. This reinforces in-group homogeneity and out-group exclusion because according to van Dijk's ideological square, the emphasis of out-group exclusion can strengthen in-group homogeneity, thus highlighting *our* good qualities indirectly. Thus, we could conclude that news consumers can judge news outlets' ideological stance to an issue.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by Incheon National University Research Grant in 2019

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