A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Chinese Caricatures on Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Most world countries have recently witnessed the emergence of covid-19 which has influenced different aspects of people's life and led to different types of political tensions among which is that between America and China. The two parties have started a new type of media war accusing each other of the responsibility for the spread of the virus. Many devices have been used in this war including political caricatures which has recently increased in number. This increase in the use of political caricatures in everyday media gives rise to some controversy over their ideologies and the linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies employed to convey these ideologies. This creates an obvious need to critically investigate these caricatures to find out these ideologies and strategies. This study is an attempt to critically investigate some selected Chinese political caricatures on Covi-19. The study is based on the hypotheses that Chinese political caricatures draw heavily on extra-linguistic devices to convey their intended messages which involve claiming good things and innocence on self-part, and claiming bad things, criticism, and mocking on the other part. To achieve the aims of the study and verify its hypotheses, three Caricatures are selected from three Chinese newspapers: *China Daily, CGTN (China Global Television Network),* and *Global Times.* The selected caricatures have been analyzed in the light of an eclectic model based on Faiclough (1998) and Kress and Van Leuween (2006). The obtained results have been analyzed using suitable statistical tools. The results of the selected caricatures have shown that Chinese caricatures aim to criticize and mock of American procedures in facing the pandemic.

Introduction

America and China have repeatedly accused each other of being the source of the virus. China claims that Covid-19 is manufactured by the American army. In contrary, America considers the virus as a part of the Chinese reaction toward the trade war due to the tariffs imposed on Chinese imports by Donald Trump. China responds to the American accusation by indicating that American administration is weak and could not face the crisis, so they blame China (Christensen, 2020: 2).

This verbal media conflict between America and China has been a theme for more than one genre of texts among which is political caricatures with which the present study is concerned. An increasing number of caricatures has been employed by each party to defend itself, and blame the emergence of the virus and its consequent miseries on the opponent part. This increasing employment of caricatures in the Chinese media raises some critical questions about the way in which linguistic and extra-linguistic devices are used to affirm its claims and deliver its intended message.

The problem addressed in this study can be represented by the sort of uncertainty that may exist over the answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the main elements employed in Chinese caricatures?
2. What are the main ideologies conveyed in Chinese caricatures?

On CDA

CDA has been defined by many scholars and from different perspectives. Wodak & Meyer (2009:14,31) state that CDA is a cross-discipline presented at the beginning of 1990s by many scholars among whom are Theo van, Leeuwen, Gunther Kress, Teun van Dijk as well as Norman Fairclough.

Fairclough (1993:135) holds that:

A discourse analysis aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes, to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

In the view of CDA, language is discourse. Fairclough and Graham (2002:188), state that language can be regarded as social process which is interconnected dialectically with others. Accordingly, Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258), argue that CDA is interested in analyzing real social interaction examples that take a partial or complete linguistic form as it aims to make visible "the ideological loading of particular ways of using language and the relations of power" which underlie them (ibid).

Van Dijk (1998: 352) proposes another definition of CDA describing it as a field where both spoken and written texts can be examined or analyzed to discover the discursive sources of dominance, power, bias and inequality. Similarly, Janks (2000:177) indicates that language can be examined critically by CDA," how language works to position readers in the interests of power".

Principles and Aims of CDA

Fairclough and Wodak (1997:271) summarize the principles and aims of CDA as follows:
1. CDA is interested not only in language and its use, but it also takes into account the linguistic characters of cultural and social processes and structures.
2. CDA regards power relations as discursive. It studies the discursive and linguistic structure of power social relations in contemporary societies (Fairclough & Wodak,1997:272).
3. Discourse has a significant role in ordering culture and society, as it asserts their dialectical relationship. (Ibid).
4. Discourse has a role to play in forming ideological work. So, there are some

ideologies behind discourse, it is not viewed as neutral. Ideologies have a prominent role in constructing and representing a society that reproduces unequal relations of power, as well as exploitation and domination relations (Fairclough and Wodak (1997:275).
5. Discourse can be regarded as historical. This means that "discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking the context into account" (Ibid:276).
6. The relation between text and society is mediated. In this sense, CDA can be understood as "making connections between social and cultural structures and processes on the one hand, and properties of text, on the other" (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:277).

Methodology

The Adopted Model

The present study adopts an eclectic model based on Fairclough (1989), and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) models. The elements quoted from Fairclough are used for analyzing linguistic elements (discoursal level), while those quoted from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) are used for analyzing image and extra linguistics elements (the semiotic level). Blow is a brief account of each element of the model.

1. Fairclough's Model (1989)

Fairclough's (1989) model consists of a three-step analysis process linked to three interrelated dimensions of discourse: object analysis, the process by which an object is produced and received, and the social and historical conditions that control these processes.

1.1. Text Analysis (Description)

The first analytical interest of Fairclough's model is the text. According to Fairclough (1995b:57), text analysis covers the linguistic description of the formal properties of the text including

grammar, vocabulary, phoneme, semantics, and cohesion organization above the sentence level.

1.2. Processing Analysis (Interpretation)

This includes the analysis of the production process, interpretation and consumption. This dimension is concerned with the way people interpret, reproduce, or transfer texts. It clarifies the relationship between discourse and text processes. Reading is the product of an interface between the characteristics of the text and the resources and interpretive practices that the interpreter uses to influence the text.

1.3. Social Analysis (Explanation)

This dimension is concerned with issues of authority. Analysis of this dimension includes exploring the ways in which discourses operate in various spheres of society. It represents the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality. The direct condition, from which the text arises is important for an authentic interpretation of the text.

2. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006)

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:3) indicate how visual grammar describes the way people, places, etc. are visually integrated into meaningful wholes. They model the compositional constructs that are conventions of Western visual semiotics in an effort to make an analysis of their use, that is, to produce meaning by signs of contemporary imagery.

2.1. The Representational Dimension

It represents the relationship between the things that go out in the world and those within us. This includes two types of processes: narrative processes (describing and rendering dynamic "cascading actions and events, processes of change, and transient spatial arrangements")), and conceptual processes (considering static and "representing participants in terms of class, structure or meaning")) (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006:59) & (Jung 2015: 51-53).

2.2. The Interactive Dimension

In the second dimension, Kress and van Leeuwen address the interaction that takes place between the interactive participants, producers and viewers of the image. They refer to the producers which visually encode social meanings in the images using certain factors, such as the "gaze" of the participants, the "distance" from the viewer, the "angle" through which the viewer sees the participants, and 'modality'.

2.3. Compositional Dimension

The focus in the third dimension is on composition, and how the representational and interactive elements of the image relate to each other, resulting in a meaningful whole. The elements of the images can be classified into three systems: (1) The value of information (2) Salience (3) Frame.

Data Analysis

1. Analysis of Caricature No. 1

Figure 1. Caricature No. 1

1.1. Introductory Note

1.1.1. On the Designer

Luo Jie learned to draw caricatures on his own. He began drawing cartoon at the end of 2000 and started working at China Daily in 2002. Now, he is deputy chief of the Art Department at China Daily and draws cartoons for the comments page. He won the Chinese News Award for cartoons eight times. (chinadaily.com)

1.1.2. On the Caricature

The image is entitled "Too Busy Blaming China" published by China Daily newspaper, on May 19, 2020. An American politician shoots toward a target which represents China using machine gun and the bullets are like blaming signs. Behind him there is an old American citizen hitting by coronavirus.

1.2. Analysis of Linguistic Elements

1.2.1. Text Analysis

The texts in the image are:

1. SORRY, NO TIME
2. HELP!
3. US senior citizens
4. BLAME CHINA

The texts in general indicate that American politicians are engaging to blame China instead of taking care of their citizens. Most of the words used in the texts are nouns which indicates the seriousness of the situation and receiving no attention from the government. Using the word "help!" alone, by the senior, indicates that the situation is so difficult that he could not say any other word. The same thing is true for the politician who seems engaging to blame China vainly and who cannot take any other procedures. This refers to the weakness of American government with the situation. Blaming China is the only available pretext to American government. Instead of taking serious decisions and effective procedures to deal with the virus, they could do nothing but blaming China.

1.2.2. Processing Analysis

The aim of the producer of the text is to show the world, in general, and American people, in particular, that their governments are not serious in their procedures, and they have no ability to treat the situation. So, 'blaming China' is the only way to reduce the public anger. The producer also aims to mock the USA government. Using small font to write "US senior citizens", the designer aims to promote the idea that no care has been given to American people.

1.2.3. Social Analysis

Socially, the designer aims to gain the world's view that China is innocent and it has no sin in spreading the virus. He wants to show the public how American government is week and has no proceedings but blaming China.

1.3. Analysis of Extra Linguistic Elements

1.3.1. Representational Dimension

Participants in the image are: an American politician, an old citizen, and coronavirus figure. There are other secondary participants such as the gun, the bat, and many boxes.

There are more than one vector in the image: one vector is made by the American politician to the opposite target, another is by the US senior citizen as an actor to the American politician who is the goal. The politician as a reactor looks to the opposite side which represents China as a phenomenon. Another vector is from coronavirus figure as an actor to the senior citizen as a goal. The politician seems engaging in throwing the blame on China about the bad situation of American people and the spreading of coronavirus, but ignoring the calling for help from US senior citizen. Behind the politician, coronavirus is busy with hitting people hardly facing no serious procedures from the government to limit its spreading.

The image is highly symbolic. The senior citizen is the symbolic attribute while coronavirus figure is the carrier in the symbolic relation.

1.3.2. Interactive Dimension

All the gazes in the image are offers. The participants' gazes do not directly go to the viewer, they are oblique.
The angle of the points of view is oblique creating a sense of detachment between the viewer and the participants. The distance is rather far. The participants and the viewers are like strangers. Modality is high, many details are depicted with a relatively modulated colors.

1.3.3. Compositional Dimension

The American politician is brought to the foreground with a central position which makes him the most salient element. The other elements are distributed in the image. The boxes on the below left side create their frame. US senior citizen and coronavirus are in the background. The image is divided into two horizontal parts.

2. Analysis of Caricature No. 2

Figure 2. Caricature No. 2

2.1. Introductory Note

2.1.1. On the Designer

Wang Chun is a multidisciplinary artist. He works with media ranging from mixed-media painting, photography, videography, to interactive technologies such as web and sensors. A major theme of her work is critical reflection on the many changes that digital culture has on societies. She also produces work that responds to modern lifestyles and political concerns of the present, and invites audiences to reflect on these issues (licartists.org).

2.1.2. On the Caricature

The caricature was presented by CGTN (China Global Television Network), on August 28, 2020. Under the heading "Clutching at the 'China' Straw won't Save Uncle Sam". The participants in the image are: uncle Sam who represents American government, the sea as a whole, many waves and coronavirus figures.

2.2. Analysis of Linguistic Elements

2.2.1. Text Analysis

Four texts are included in the image:
1. COVID -19
2. UNEMPLOYMENT
3. 2020 ELECTION
4. CHINA THREAT

Each text here represents a problem facing America. Starting from the title of the image, uncle Sam refers to American government. The title is used metaphorically to indicate that China is a pretext used by America to cover its mistakes. The term 'uncle Sam' is usually associated with a business man from Tory, New york, "Samuel Wilson". Known affectionately as 'uncle Sam' Wilson. America is surrounded by many problems such as covid-19, unemployment, and China's threat. American government still blames China and take it as a pretext to throw its mistakes on thinking that blaming China will save them, but in vain.

2.2.2. Processing Analysis

The designer wants to show how USA faces many problems and it still blames China for these problems. He aims to show that blaming China will not save America and that uncle Sam will drown sooner or later if he keeps on blaming others. The producer uses nouns in all texts to show the reality of the situation.

2.2.3. Social Analysis

In all the texts, the producer talks about the social problems of American society.

2.3. Analysis of Extra Linguistic Elements

2.3.1. Representational Dimension

The main participant is 'uncle Sam' with other secondary participants including the sea, many waves, the rescue tire, coronavirus figure, and the palm on the beach.

There is one vector made by uncle Sam, the actor, to the rescue tire which is the goal. The image contains strange vertical relationship. Uncle Sam is the symbolic attribute while the sea is the symbolic suggestive, the carrier.

Uncle Sam seems in the middle of many waves in the sea of problems who tries to take China as a pretext to save him from drowning. He tries to blow in a punctured rescue tire which represents China as a threat to save him but still he gains nothing. The sky is full of dark clouds which represent the difficulty and ambiguity of the situation. Safety seems so far and unreachable for uncle Sam with the pretext he has. The punctured rescue tire represents the weak excuse to save him.

2.3.2. Interactive Dimension

The gaze in the image is an offer, uncle Sam offers both the participants and the viewers to imagine how difficult circumstances he is in. The image is taken from a close social distance, making the relation between the participants and the viewer impersonal. The image is from a frontal horizontal angle, both the represented participants and the viewers are involved within one social relation. Modality is rather law, except uncle Sam who is depicted in a high modality.

2.3.3. Compositional Dimension

Coronavirus' wave could be said to have received the most salience, it is so big and it is about to hit uncle Sam. It has informative value. The borders of the waves create many horizontal frames and seclude uncle Sam.
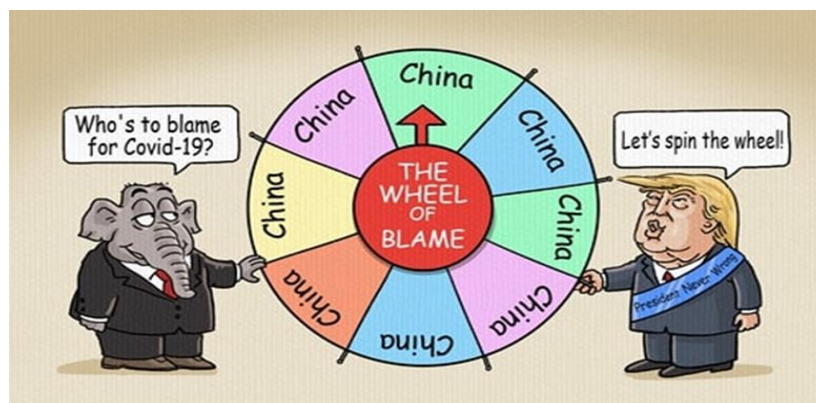
3. Analysis of Caricature No. 3

Figure 3. Caricature No. 3

3.1. Introductory Note

3.1.1. On the Designer

Liu Rui has been a cartoonist for Global Times since 2003. She is interested in political cartoons and illustrations. Li Rui is a young and promising artist who graduated from the China Academy of Arts in Hangzhou and the University der Künste in Berlin. She paints characters inside glass using a mirror technique which reflects the naivety of Chinese realism of miniature within glass paintings. (ifa-gallery.com)

3.1.2. On the Caricature

The image was published by Global Times in May 2020. The participants in the image are: Donald Trump, the president of America, and the elephant which is the republican party motto which is considered as a member in the republican party. The secondary participant is the wheel of fortune.

3.2. Analysis of Linguistic Elements

3.2.1. Text Analysis

Five texts appear in the image;
1. Who's to blame for covid-19?
2. THE WHEEL OF BLAME
3. China (repeated many times)
4. Let's spin the wheel!
5. President never wrong

The main idea behind all the texts in the image is the accusation of China of covid-19. A direct question from the elephant to the president Trump is to blame somebody about the disease. The president Trump in the place of power who has the highest authority in the country, his speech has a huge effect in the society and the world.

The word 'China' is repeated many times in 'the wheel of blame' which indicates there is no other way to arise from the situation but blaming China. The repetition of the word 'China' indicates the big failure of America to deal with the crisis.

Metaphorically, 'the wheel of blame' is used instead of the 'the wheel of fortune'. The wheel of fortune is used when there are many other choices on the table and this depends on how fortune and experienced the person is, to win the prize or the big amount of money. On the wheel of blaming the republican party, there are not any other choices only China.

3.2.2. Processing Analysis

Blaming others and refusing to admit mistakes is the main idea the designer aims to show in the texts. She tries to show the big failure of American government to deal with the situation and the weak procedures of the authority. The blundering in decisions is the main failure of the republican party and that is clear in blaming China.

3.2.3. Social Analysis

The wheel of fortune is a risk game. The gambler risks all what he owns. Here, Trump in his blundering decisions risks Americans' souls when he finds no solution for the virus. He still blames China. The policy of the republican party will lead to their failure.

3.3. Analysis of Extra Linguistic Elements

3.3.1. Representational Dimension

The participants are Donald Trump and the 'elephant' the republican party motto. The secondary participant is the wheel of fortune.

Many vector relations appear in the image. Both the elephant and Trump look at the wheel of fortune creating vector relations connecting them to the same point. Another vector is depicted in the line stretching from the elephant's smile to the trump's face expressions. The elephant is the symbolic attribute and the wheel is the carrier. The process is transactional.

The elephant which represents the republican party, seems as if he covers a shy smile about his question. He seems as if he is not sure if his question is appropriate or meaningful.

3.3.2. Interactive Dimension

The elephant's gaze is demand; he asks Trump to do something. On the other hand, Trump's gaze is offer; he offers the viewer to see his hard work in dealing with the crisis. The distance is rather far which suggests a kind of strangeness.

The angle is frontal horizontal which creates a sort of involvement between participants and the viewers.

Modality is high, the image is depicted in rather modulated colors with detailed lines, yet it lacks illumination.

3.3.3. Compositional Dimension

The wheel of fortune is centered which makes it the most salient element in the image. The wheel divides the image into two vertical parts: The elephant on the left and Trump on the right.

Discussion of Analysis Results

The results of analyzing the selected Caricatures are discussed here in the form of answers to the research questions raised above.

1. What are the main elements employed in Chinese caricatures?

As for the linguistic elements, the number of words in all Chinese caricatures is (33). Nouns are (16) forming (48.4 %), adjectives are (3) forming (9 %), and verbs are (5) forming (15 %). Nouns have the highest percentage which indicates that the Chinese media mocks of its accusation for the virus by America. Table (1) below shows the frequency & percentage of linguistic elements in the selected caricatures.

Table 1. Frequency & Percentage of Linguistic Elements in the selected Caricatures

Caricature No.	Words No.	Nouns		Adjectives		Verbs	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	9	5	55.5%	2	22%	1	11%
2	5	5	100%	——	0%	——	0%
3	19	6	31.5%	1	5%	4	21%
Total	33	16	48.4%	3	9%	5	15%

Many extra-linguistic elements are used in the caricatures under study which stimulates the idea that the American government is weak and unable to face the crisis. Instead, it blames China. There are (13) participants in Chinese caricatures. The participants who are engaged in narrative process are (6), forming (46 %). In conceptual process there are (6) symbols, forming (46 %). The frequency of gazes is (6), forming (46%). The salient colors in Chinese caricatures are (Black used two times, red used one time, white one time, green one time, and yellow one time). They are (6), forming (46%). The process of composition are (7) forming (53.8 %).

Table 2. Frequency & Percentage of Extra-linguistic Elements in the selected Caricatures

Caricature No.	Participants	Narrative Process		Conceptual Process		Gaze		Colors		Composition	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	6	3	50 %	3	50%	3	50%	2	33.3%	2	33.3%
2	4	1	25%	2	50%	1	25%	2	50%	3	75%
3	3	2	66.6%	1	33.3%	2	66 %	2	66.6%	2	66.6%
Total	13	6	46%	6	465	6	46%	6	46%	7	53.8%

2. What are the main ideologies conveyed in Chinese caricatures?

Most of selected Chinese caricatures convey the idea that American administration is weak and cannot face the crisis. American politicians have no solution to deal with the virus except blaming China. At this point, most of the Chinese caricatures mock and criticize the American procedures in dealing with the virus. Table (3) below shows the frequency & percentage of ideologies in the selected Caricatures.

Table 3. Frequency & Percentage Chinese Ideologies in the selected caricatures

Caricature No.	Ideologies				
	Ideology No.	Mocking		Criticism	
1	2	✔		✔	
2	2	✔		✔	
3	2	✔		✔	
Total	6	3	50%	3	50%

As Table (3) shows, (6) ideologies are conveyed in the selected caricatures, (3) of them are mocking of America due to their accusation of China as the manufacturer of the virus, forming (50%). The other (3) ideologies are criticisms of America due to their weak procedures in facing the virus, forming (50%).

Conclusions

The findings of the study lead to the following conclusions:

1. The meaning of the caricature is not directly or easily accessed. It depends on the extent that one succeeds in establishing an interrelationship between textual and visual elements on one hand, and social reality on the other hand.
2. Caricatures are very communicative means, one caricature can represent a long article with different events. A single caricature can use many elements to present an integrative message.
3. The selected Chinese caricatures reveal that the US cannot take any procedures in dealing with the virus but blaming China.

So 'blaming China' is the only decision of the US.
4. Mocking and criticism are the two main ideas behind most of the Chinese Caricatures. Chinese media mocks the Americans' accusation of China of being the source of the virus.
5. Chinese caricatures tend to employ more extra-linguistic elements than linguistic ones to convey their intended messages.

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