



Report on 2nd Colloquium of New Discourses in Contemporary China Lancaster University 20-21 September 2007

The second colloquium of New Discourses in Contemporary China was held in Lancaster University on 20-21 September, 2007. About thirty people participated in the presentations and workshops.

Professor Chilton chaired the opening ceremony. He briefly introduced to the audience the project *New Discourses in Contemporary China: Social Change and Anglophone Perceptions*, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, and expressed his thanks to Professor Zhang Maizeng for his contribution to the first conference held in Nankai University in April 2006, as well as Professor Bob Jessop and Professor David Brown for their support to the organization of this event. Professor Jessop and Professor Brown also made welcoming speeches. Later that evening, at the conference dinner, Professor Anna Siewierska, head of the department of Linguistics and English Language welcomed the participants at the Colloquium in the context of the growing collaboration between the university and several universities in China.

During the colloquium, 12 speakers spoke about their research, with topics covering a wide range of issues. These included the possible hybridization of the Chinese language, the image of China in the global environment, the nature of change in business organizations, concepts of innovation (or *zizhu chuangxin*) and, issues of identity, economic development and ideology in Hong Kong-mainland relations. Several papers dealt directly with matters of discourse, both at the macro- and the micro-level. A strong argument was put forward for viewing discourse organization in China in terms of an ecological framework, with elements of Taoist philosophy—the latter appearing in several other contributions as an important contemporary influence or legitimating resource alongside Confucianism. The relevance of *guanxi* and *renqing* in Chinese discourse structures as a whole was discussed, as were concepts of social harmony and *he*. The themes of power and corruption also emerged in debate. Several papers addressed specific discourse practices and contexts, including language and identity in Taiwan, local politics in a rural village, quality evaluation in educational institutions, power relations in public information outlets, advertising in Hong Kong, and formal political speeches in both domestic and foreign policy settings.

This was a truly inter- or trans-disciplinary event, with contributors coming from management sciences, anthropology, linguistics, media studies, economics and

political science. The theoretical frameworks included Cultural Political Economy, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics, and Critical Discourse Analysis. In addition to the interaction among academic disciplines, the colloquium also discussed an important inherent feature of the project—namely, its intercultural and interlinguistic nature. The theory and methodology of comparative, cross-linguistic analysis of political rhetoric was outlined and discussed, giving rise to an increased attention to the problems of translation in discourse studies in general.

The abstracts and PowerPoint presentations for each speaker are available on the NDCC website (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/ndcc/>) .

A major part of the Colloquium were the small-group workshops held on the second day, moderated by Paul Chilton and Ruth Wodak. Rapporteurs were assigned from each group who reported the most important observations and discussions in the final plenary round.

These groups were designed to enable more detailed analysis and discussion of textual materials. The focus was on two sets of texts. The first consisted of formal speeches by Premier Wen Jiabao (both in Chinese and English translation) and President George W. Bush. The second set of texts included a BBC TV documentary on the impact of commercial construction on the farming community of a Chinese village (visual material available on NDCC website). The participants found contrasts (as well as some similarities) between the two political speeches in terms of audience interaction, text organization and their semiotic-political implications. However, major differences were also observed, both with respect to the discourse functions of the two speeches and with respect to the kinds of rhetorical and pragmatic resources that each deployed. These salient differences were related *inter alia* to the two different political systems in China and the US. Hence, a differentiated context analysis was also emphasized as a necessary part of comparative text analysis. In addition, issues of translation were raised and debated extensively. Discussion of the BBC report of the Chinese village raised numerous complex questions, including whether the BBC discourse presupposed stereotyped attitudes, to what extent and by what linguistic means the BBC report was neutral. This discussion, however, went beyond the textual materials themselves to consider the actual facts of commercial development and its political ramifications in the Chinese context itself, as well as the ways in which the Chinese media may or may not report on such events.

The participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to engage in small-group discussions and the workshops. We were also gratified to hear from participants that they enjoyed the environment of the colloquium and the conference dinner.

Paul Chilton
Ruth Wodak
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